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Hot and humid conditions today and in coming days

Protect yourself and your family

With temperatures in the 90's and high humidity levels today and expected to continue in the coming days, Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials are warning residents to be extremely cautious by limiting outdoor physical activity as much as possible and by taking other precautionary measures.

Normally, the body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat. If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, the victim may suffer a heat-related illness which can become serious or even deadly if unattended.

Heat exhaustion can result when too much time is spent in a very warm environment, resulting in excessive sweating without adequate fluid and electrolyte replacement. This can occur whether indoors or outdoors, with or without physical activity. Symptoms may include dizziness, headache, nausea, abdominal cramps, shallow breathing, cold and clammy skin, muscle tremors and heavy perspiration. Persons with heat exhaustion should be moved indoors to an air-conditioned room, or if outside, to a shaded area.

Heat stroke can result from overexposure to direct sunlight, or to very high temperatures. Seek medical assistance if a person has an extremely high body temperature (above 103 F), with red, hot and dry skin, and experiencing a rapid pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea and confusion. If heat stroke is present, find a cool place--preferably an air-conditioned setting--loosen the clothing, put the person in a semi-sitting position, and bathe the head and body with cold water. Death or permanent disability can result if medical attention is not sought promptly.

CCDPH recommendations:

- Drink 1 to 1-1/2 quarts of fluid daily to prevent dehydration. Water, fruit juices and juice drinks are the best choices. Avoid alcohol and caffeine because they dehydrate the body.
- Avoid salt tablets and highly salted foods.
- Plan activities for the coolest part of the day - before noon or in the evening.
- Wear light colored, lightweight clothing. If you must go outside during the hottest part of the day, wear a hat.
- Use a sun screen with a sun protection factor (SPF) greater than 15 to protect yourself from sunburn.
- While outdoors, rest frequently in a shady area.
- Check frequently on ill family members, the elderly and neighbors.
- **Never** leave children, the elderly or pets in a parked car, not even for a few minutes. Brain damage or death can occur from the rapid rise of temperature inside the vehicle.

For more information please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org, or call CCDPH at 708-492-2000.

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