

TDOH Guidance on Heat-Related Illness

Guidance on directing calls from those in need:

- If a person says he or she is dizzy, having difficulty seeing, having chest pains or is too sick to drive, tell him or her to hang up and immediately call 911 for emergency care.
- If a person is feeling sick after being exposed to the heat or has general health related questions, tell the individual to call their doctor's office or their county health department for information.
- If the person is in need of a fan or air conditioner, ask him or her to contact their Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program county agency. For a listing, Department of Human Services Web site at state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/liheap-agencies.pdf.

Symptoms of heat stroke:

- body temperature above 103 degrees Fahrenheit
- red, hot and dry skin without sweating
- rapid, strong pulse
- throbbing headache
- dizziness
- nausea
- confusion
- loss of consciousness

Other heat-related illnesses:

- heat exhaustion
- heat cramps
- sunburn
- heat rash

Symptoms of heat-related illness:

- heavy sweating
- muscle cramps
- nausea
- headaches
- cold, clammy skin
- dizziness
- rapid heart beat

Statistics:

- 132 people were hospitalized for heat stroke in Tennessee in 2005.
- In 2005, 10 people in the state died as a result of the illness.
- 1,373 people visited the emergency room because of heat stroke.
- Each year, approximately 400 persons nationwide die from heat stroke.
- As of August 23, 2007, 14 heat-related deaths had been reported to the Department of Health, with 13 of those occurring in Shelby County.



Steps to avoid heat-related illness from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Remember to consume non-alcoholic, low-sugar drinks in hot weather.
- **Replace salt and minerals.** Heavy sweating from increased temperatures can deplete your body's salt and minerals. Non-alcoholic drinks, like sports drinks, can help you replenish these reserves.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, as well as a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection. Wear SPF 15 or higher sunscreen every day.
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully.** Try to limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours with rest breaks in shady areas, if available.
- **Pace yourself.** If you are unaccustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, start slowly and increase effort gradually. If your heart is pounding or you are gasping for breath, stop the activity and rest in a cool, shady area.
- **Stay cool indoors.** If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the mall or library to cool off. Cool showers or baths, as well as keeping your stove and oven off, are other ways to cool down inside.
- **Use the buddy system.** Partner with a friend and watch for signs of heat-related illness in each other. Senior citizens are more susceptible, so if you are over 65, ask a friend to check on you over the phone twice a day. If you know someone in this age group, remember to check on them at least twice a day.
- **Monitor those at high risk.** Infants and children under 4 years of age, people over 65, people who are overweight, those who overexert themselves during work or exercise and people who are physically ill (especially those who have heart disease or high blood pressure, take certain medication, or suffer from insomnia, depression or poor circulation) are especially at risk.

For more information about heat-related illnesses, including prevention and treatment tips, visit the CDC's Extreme Heat Safety Web site at http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp or visit the Tennessee Department of Health Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us>.