



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HEALTH COMMISSIONER URGES ALL TENNESSEANS TO KNOW THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – As the heat wave continues in Tennessee, Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN, encourages every Tennessean to know the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and urges that citizens act promptly to aid those who are sick or may be at risk.

“This extreme, prolonged heat worsens symptoms for people with chronic illnesses like high blood pressure and heart disease as well as those who are overweight or obese. These people are at increased risk for heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses,” said Cooper. “As the daytime temperatures continue to remain above 95 degrees for the next several days, we all must remain vigilant and know the signs of heat-related illness to protect ourselves, our family, our neighbors and friends.”

Heat stroke, the most life-threatening heat-related illness, occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature, which rises quickly without the ability to cool down. If emergency treatment is not provided, heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability. Symptoms include body temperature above 103 degrees Fahrenheit; red, hot and dry skin without sweating; rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and loss of consciousness. Other illnesses caused by extreme heat include heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn and heat rash. Symptoms include dizziness, heavy sweating, muscle cramps, rapid heart beat, nausea, headaches and cold/clammy skin.

Call for immediate medical assistance if you believe you or another person is experiencing heat stroke. While waiting on emergency assistance, get the victim to a shady area, cool them rapidly using cool water and monitor body temperature until it reaches 101 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit, and do not give the victim any fluids to drink.

Yesterday, Governor Phil Bredesen urged Tennesseans to take common sense steps to cope with the serious public health issue created by continued record-breaking temperatures across the state. Bredesen has also asked Cooper and state Education Commissioner Lana Seivers to be particularly attentive to the needs of local governments and school systems to ensure they have adequate resources to limit the danger caused by the heat, particularly to children. Bredesen also announced that he has made additional emergency funds available as needed for the purchase of air conditioners for low-income citizens in need through local governments and community action agencies. For more information, citizens are asked to call their local Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. For a listing, go to the Department of Human Services Web site at state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/liheap-agencies.pdf.

– more –

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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 in extreme heat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer a few simple steps to avoid these preventable illnesses.

- **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.

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This press release can be accessed online at <http://health.state.tn.us/Newsreleases/082307.htm>.