

Harris County
HCPHES
Public Health & Environmental Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Heat Rises to Dangerous Levels in Harris County

The best defense against heat-related illness is prevention! Heat-related illnesses occur when your body is unable to properly cool itself. Although anyone can suffer from heat-related illness, the following people are at greater risk than others:

- Infants and children up to four years
- People 65 years of age or older
- People who are overweight
- People who over exercise
- People who are ill or who take certain medications

Learning the warning signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion is very important because very high body temperatures can damage the brain or other vital organs. **If you or a loved one experiences the following symptoms seek medical attention immediately:**

- **Heat exhaustion:** muscle cramps; headache; heavy sweating; tiredness; dizziness; nausea or vomiting; weak or rapid pulse; and/or pale skin color.
- **Heat stroke:** hot, dry, red skin; no sweating; dilated pupils; loss of consciousness; nausea; very high temperature; rapid heart beat; confusion; throbbing headache and/or dizziness.

Keeping cool is the number one defense against heat-related illnesses and death. If you have an air conditioning unit – turn it on. Exposure to air-conditioning for even a few hours will reduce the risk for getting a heat-related illness. If air conditioning is not available, pull shades over windows, close the blinds and use fans to cool rooms. If you have a box fan, place it next to a window and open another window on the opposite side of the room to create cross ventilation. In addition to staying in a cool space, drink plenty of water. ***Staying cool and drinking water are the best ways to prevent heat stroke and heat exhaustion.***

To learn more about heat-related illnesses, warning signs and tips for staying healthy go to www.hcphe.org, click on Summer Health and Safety, and then Beat the Heat.

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www.hcphe.org

Heat Illnesses Can Be Serious

Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Pets

- Drink a lot of water (even when you are not thirsty). By the time you realize you are thirsty, your body's water supply is already lower than it should be. Drinking sports drinks can replace the salt and potassium that may be lost by sweating. **WARNING:** *If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.*
- At the first signs of heat illness, get out of the sun or your body temperature will continue to rise. (For more information on heat illnesses go to www.hcphes.org)
- Do not drink alcohol and avoid drinks with caffeine because they can speed up water loss.
- Limit outdoor exercise and outdoor work, if possible.
- If you *must* go outside, try to do so either in the morning or in the evening. While outside, take frequent breaks and find air-conditioned places or shady areas where you can rest. This will give your body a chance to recover.
- Use the Buddy System. If you have to go out in the heat, go with someone. Heat illnesses can cause confusion and a loss of consciousness.
- Wear light, loose fitting clothing and a hat with vents such as straw hats.
- Take cool showers to cool off.
- **If your heart begins to pound, you become lightheaded, confused, weak or faint, STOP ALL ACTIVITY!! GET IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE!! Go to a cool area or get in the shade and rest.**
- Pets can also suffer from excessive heat. Make sure your pets have adequate drinking water and a shady place to rest.

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