

HEAT DANGERS - PREVENTION OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS AND DEATH July 2014

Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable. People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to cool down properly, especially in high temperatures and high humidity. While all are at risk, the threat is increased for people with cognitive impairments, those taking certain medications and/or with acute/chronic illness, and the elderly and very young. **Agencies should activate heat-related plans of action when external temperatures reach 80°, and continue with implementation as temperatures rise.** Individualized plans may also be needed for people at greater risk.

TAKING PRECAUTIONS:

- Training should be provided for all appropriate staff in prevention and recognition of heat-related illnesses.
- Be aware of the heat, and modify or reschedule outdoor activities accordingly.
- Stay in air conditioned areas whenever possible and stay in the shade when outdoors.
- Drink plenty of fluids, limit caffeine, and eat well-balanced, light, and regular meals.
- Wear loose fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothing.
- When indoors, use window coverings to help keep the inside areas cool.
- Be aware that fans do not provide cooling—they only move hot air around.
- **Vehicles:** Temperatures inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to a dangerous level. In only 10 minutes, the temperature can rise 19° F, with heat increasing as more time elapses.
 - Do not leave individuals unattended in a vehicle, even with windows down, no matter how brief.
 - Establish a routine to be sure all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading. Check each seat for sleeping/reclining individuals.

TYPES OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES:

Heat Exhaustion – a milder form of heat-related illness. Signs and symptoms include:

- Heavy sweating, paleness, skin may feel cool.
- Muscle cramps, fatigue, weakness.
- Dizziness, headache, fainting, nausea or vomiting.
- Pulse rate may be fast and weak, and breathing may be fast and shallow.

Heat Stroke – This is a **medical emergency**. When a person's body temperature rises to a dangerous level, it can lead to vital organ damage and death. Signs and symptoms include:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103 °F).
- Red, hot, dry skin and absence of sweating.
- Rapid, strong pulse rate, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.

IMMEDIATE STEPS TO TAKE:

- **Contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) immediately** if heat stroke is suspected or a person is exhibiting extreme symptoms of heat exhaustion.
- Get the person to a cool, shady area, and attempt to cool them down with cool water applied to the skin. Monitor body temperature, if possible.
- Give fluids if person is alert and able to swallow.
- Seek medical follow-up for milder heat-related illness as soon as possible.

For more information, please visit: www.health.ny.gov/publications/1243/ and <http://www.ggweather.com/heat/>