



News for Immediate Release

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First Dangerous Heat Wave of the Season Expected to Arrive this Weekend

Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Aging Offer Important Heat Safety Tips

Harrisburg – With hot temperatures and high humidity expected to make an early appearance in some parts of Pennsylvania this Memorial Day weekend, the Departments of Health and Aging are urging everyone to take simple steps to prevent serious heat-related illness or even death.

“With so many outdoor activities planned this holiday weekend, people need to be aware of the serious health threat posed by temperatures that may feel as high as 100 degrees or more in some areas,” said Department of Health Secretary Dr. Eli Avila. “Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable, yet each year Pennsylvanians get sick or die from underestimating just how dangerous hot weather can be.”

Healthy people of any age can experience heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to handle the high temperatures. Those at greatest risk are people over 65, infants and young children, and those with heart disease, high blood pressure, breathing problems or other chronic conditions.

“As a person gets older, their body may not be able to handle extreme temperatures as well. Certain types of medications can also affect how your body responds to heat,” said Secretary of Aging Brian Duke. “Simple actions such as wearing sunscreen, rescheduling events to cooler times of the day, and wearing a hat to keep the sunlight off of your head can go a long way in keeping people healthy.”

Individuals should do the following to avoid heat-related illness:

- Stay indoors in air conditioning as much as possible. Air conditioning is the number one protective factor against heat-related illness and death;
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day, and don't wait until you are thirsty to drink liquids. Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar as they can cause dehydration (loss of body fluids);
- If you must be outside in the heat, limit activity to morning and evening hours, and try to rest often in shady areas;
- Dress in light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Also use a sunscreen of SPF15 or higher;
- Check on those who may be more at risk from high temperatures like infants, children or older individuals; and
- Never leave your children or pets in vehicles.

The two most common types of heat-related illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke, which is more serious. Someone suffering from heat stroke may experience a body temperature above 103° F; red, hot, and dry skin; rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness. If someone is experiencing heat stroke, call for emergency medical assistance and attempt to cool the person off in a shady place while waiting for help to arrive. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Heat exhaustion can occur after sun exposure or not drinking enough fluids after spending time outside. Symptoms of heat exhaustion are heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and fainting. To treat heat exhaustion, rest, drink plenty of water and cool off the body. If not treated, heat exhaustion could result in heat stroke.

Many of Pennsylvania's 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) are ready to assist older adults during dangerously hot weather. To find out more about AAA assistance visit: www.aging.state.pa.us.

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