Hot Weather Safety

It’s hot! When it’s a Code Red Heat Warning everyone knows it’s necessary to take extra precautions to keep from getting heat related illnesses. But, even when there isn’t a Code Red, an excessive heat watch or warning still requires extra care.

Some people are at risk of serious health effects, even death from getting overheated. Below is information about the effects of hot weather and some things to can do to keep cool.

People suffering heatstroke can appear normal and then within a matter of minutes be extremely ill. They may have hot, dry, red skin, a high body temperature of 103 degrees or more, an absence of sweat, a throbbing headache and a rapid and strong pulse. They may become confused or unconscious. People who suffer heatstroke need immediate medical attention.

Heat exhaustion is a milder illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. People suffering heat exhaustion may have pale, clammy skin, and sweat profusely. They may have muscle cramps, nausea, and dizziness. Their pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke.

For more information about heat related illnesses visit the CDC website at: http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp.

The best defense against heat related illnesses is prevention. Here are some prevention tips:

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink.
- Don’t drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar–these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library–even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.

Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:

- Infants and young children
- People aged 65 or older
- People who have a mental illness
- Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure

Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

**If you must be out in the heat:**

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.

- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.

- Try to rest often in shady areas.

- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection” on their labels).

For more information about hot weather, visit the Health Department website at: [http://health.montcopa.org/health/cwp/view,A,3,Q,67103.asp](http://health.montcopa.org/health/cwp/view,A,3,Q,67103.asp). You can receive notices about Code Red Heat Warnings and other health issues by signing up for ReadyNotifyPA at: [https://montco.alertpa.org/](https://montco.alertpa.org/)