

IDPH shares safety tips to deal with this summer's heat

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SPRINGFIELD - With high temperatures expected over the next couple of days, Illinois Department of Public Health Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. is urging Illinoisans to take preventive actions to avoid heat-related illness like heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

“High heat and humidity can lead to serious health problems. It’s important for people to recognize the signs of heat-related illness and take action to prevent becoming sick,” said Director Shah. “To help your body cope with high temperatures, take steps to stay cool, increase your fluid intake, decrease your activities and wear appropriate clothing.”

Stay Cool

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings. Cooling centers can be found by logging onto <http://www.illinois.gov/KeepCool/SitePages/CoolingCenters.aspx>.
- Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device.
- Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when it is the hottest part of the day, and avoid direct sunlight.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool showers or baths to lower your body temperature.
- Check on at-risk friends, family, and neighbors at least twice a day. These may include seniors and people with chronic health conditions.

Stay Hydrated

- Drink more water than usual and don’t wait until you’re thirsty to hydrate.
- Drink two to four cups of water every hour while working or exercising outside.
- Avoid alcohol or beverages with high amounts of sugar.

Stay Informed

- Check the local news for extreme heat warnings.
- Visit www.dph.illinois.gov for heat related information.

Normally, the body cools itself by sweating. However, if temperatures and humidity are extremely high, sweating is not effective in maintaining the body’s normal temperature. If the body does not cool properly or does not cool enough, a person may suffer a heat-related illness, which can become serious or even deadly if unattended. Warning signs and symptoms vary but may include:

Heat Exhaustion

Symptoms

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Skin cold, pale, and clammy
- Weak pulse

- Fainting and vomiting

What You Should Do

- Move to a cooler location
- Lie down and loosen your clothing
- Apply cool, wet cloths to as much of your body as possible
- Sip water
- If you have vomited and it continues, seek medical attention immediately

Heat Stroke

Symptoms

- High body temperature (above 103°F)
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Possible unconsciousness

What You Should Do

- Call 911 immediately – this is a medical emergency
- Move the person to a cooler location
- Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or a bath
- Do NOT give fluids

People most vulnerable for heat-related illness include the elderly, those who work or exercise outdoors, infants and children, the homeless or poor, and people with a chronic medical condition.

The Illinois Department on Aging encourages relatives and friends to make daily visits or calls to senior citizens living alone. When temperatures and humidity are extremely high, seniors and people with chronic health conditions should be monitored for dehydration and other effects of extreme heat. Additionally, seniors should eat lighter meals, take longer and more frequent rests, and drink plenty of fluids.

Never leave anyone, including pets, alone in a closed, parked vehicle. The air temperature inside a car rises rapidly during hot weather and can lead to brain damage or death.

Log onto www.ready.illinois.gov for more heat safety information and updates on statewide weather watches, warnings, and advisories.