

THE HEAT IS ON!

With the high heat & humidity warning, here are a few things everyone should know to care for our children, our elders and ourselves.

There are over 4,000 heat related deaths a year. 80% occur in the elderly. It is the second leading cause of death among young athletes. Those under 4 years old are also at increased risk.

The key is **prevention** of heat exhaustion or heat stroke before it happens. Here is what you can do:

ELDERS

Elderly people (that is, people aged 65 years and older) are more prone to heat stress than younger people for several reasons:

- Elderly people do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature.
- They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat.
- They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

Prevention is the key. Here is what we can do to prevent Heat Exhaustion/Stroke:

- Drink cool, nonalcoholic beverages. (If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink when the weather is hot. Also, avoid extremely cold liquids because they can cause cramps.)
- Rest.
- Take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath.
- If possible, seek an air-conditioned environment. (If you don't have air conditioning, consider visiting an air-conditioned shopping mall or public library to cool off.)
- Wear lightweight clothing.
- If possible, remain indoors in the heat of the day. Do not engage in strenuous activities.

What You Can Do to Help Protect Elderly Relatives and Neighbors

If you have elderly relatives or neighbors, you can help them protect themselves from heat-related stress:

- Visit older adults at risk at least twice a day and watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Encourage them to increase their fluid intake by drinking cool, nonalcoholic beverages regardless of their activity level. Warning: If their doctor generally limits the amount of fluid they drink or they are on water pills, they will need to ask their doctor how much they should drink while the weather is hot.
- Take them to air-conditioned locations if they have transportation problems.

YOUNG CHILDREN 0-4 years old

Young children are particularly vulnerable to heat since their systems may not be mature enough to regulate their body temperature and their bodies contain more water than an adult. When the body loses a large quantity of water, all children are at risk of **dehydration**, especially children under 1 year old. Signs of dehydration include decrease in tears production, dry mouth and skin, sunken eyes with dark circles, and depressed fontanel (hole on top of head), shortness of breath, cold extremities that are pale and marbled, decreased urine output (# of diapers or less soaked).

Signs that your child is getting **heat stroke** include elevated body temperature (40°C or 104°F), confusion, abnormal skin colour (pale or red), somnolence or unusual agitation, intense thirst with weight loss, or refuses to drink. **If your child presents with one of these alarming signs, urgent medical consultation is necessary. In case of severe signs like loss of consciousness, call an ambulance at 450-632-6505.**

Here is what PARENTS can do for their children:

- It is important to have the child drink regularly to prevent dehydration
- For breastfeeding babies, the best treatment remains breast milk; short and frequent feedings will help re-establish milk supply
- Avoid going out with your child during critical hours, between 10:00am and 3:00pm.
- If you go out, dress your child in clothing that is light-coloured and with tight knit material and cover your child's head with a wide-brimmed hat.
- Cool room, air-conditioning or fans directed towards the walls- ricochet on the baby.
- Lay the baby in an airy section of the room. The bed should not be against the wall
- Tepid bath with water 1°-2° under the body temperature as often as necessary.
- Medication against fever are not useful to treat elevated body temperature caused by extreme heat.

NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD ALONE IN A VEHICLE EVEN FOR A FEW MINUTES.

WORKERS / ATHLETES

- Before work/train, drink 1-2 cups of water, juice or sports drink.
- While working/training, take several drink breaks every hour, drinking at least a liter of fluid. Drink as much as you can during lunch breaks.
- After work/training, continue drinking to replace any fluid loss. Drink more than you think you need.
- Wear loose fitting clothing to enhance air movement. Wear cotton T-shirts and underwear to help sweat evaporate.
- Always work and train with a partner. Remind each other to drink lots of fluids and keep an eye on each other. If your partner suffers from a heat injury, treat immediately.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.

HEAT EMERGENCIES

With extreme sweating leading to fluid loss, **dehydration** becomes a serious concern. Some signs and symptoms that you are getting dehydrated include: nausea and vomiting, abdominal discomfort, visual disturbances, decreased urine output.

Prolonged exposure to heat without taking breaks and drinking plenty fluids can lead to medical emergencies. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of these emergencies to prevent life-threatening injuries.

Heat Cramps usually occur after exercise or when not accustomed to extreme heat. Symptoms include painful muscle cramps. Treatment includes rest/rehydration in a cool place.

Heat Exhaustion is a progression of heat exposure. Symptoms may include nausea and/or vomiting, headache, muscle cramps/pain. Can also include feeling dizzy, faintness, profuse sweating, moist pale skin which may feel normal to cool, rapid breathing, weakness or exhaustion, loss of consciousness. Treatment includes rest, plenty of fluids, in a cool place.

Heat stroke is considered a medical emergency. In heat stroke, the body stops sweating and the core body temperature goes up leading to organ damage and death. Signs and symptoms may include rapid, shallow breathing, rapid pulse, generalized weakness, hot, dry or possibly moist skin, little or no perspiration, loss of consciousness or irritability or bizarre behaviour, dilated pupils, seizures may be seen; no muscle cramps. If you suspect some type of heat emergency, CALL THE AMBULANCE. Treatment includes bringing the person to a cool environment, removing clothing, sponging with cool water and applying cold packs to the axilla and the groin. IF the person is cooperative and conscious, have them drink cool fluids.

If someone presents with one of these alarming signs, urgent medical consultation is necessary. In case of severe signs like loss of consciousness,

call an ambulance at 450-632-6505.