



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Take extra precautions to prevent heat illnesses during heat advisory

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health advises the public to be alert to the warning signals of heat illnesses now that the National Weather Service in Birmingham has issued a heat advisory which is in effect from noon Thursday to 7 p.m. Friday for Central Alabama.

The combination of heat and humidity will create heat index values near or above 105 degrees F both Thursday and Friday afternoons, according to the National Weather Service. In addition, overnight temperatures in many areas will not drop below 75 degrees F so that any heat that builds up in indoor areas will have very little opportunity to escape.

People should drink plenty of water, stay in an air-conditioned room, and keep out of the sun. The public should also check on the elderly and ensure pets have plenty of water to drink and a shady place to cool off.

Heat-related illnesses occur when the body's temperature control system is overloaded. The Alabama Department of Public Health cautions everyone to be alert to the warnings that may signal help is needed.

Heat stroke, sometimes called sunstroke, is the most serious heat-related illness. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature. The body's temperature rises rapidly, the sweating mechanism fails and the body is unable to cool down. Body temperature may rise to 106 degrees F or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Warning signs of heat stroke vary, but include the following:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees F)
- Red, hot and dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Unconsciousness

Get the person to a shady area, cool rapidly in a tub of cool water, place in a cool shower, spray with cool water from a garden hose, splash with cool water, or, if the humidity is low, place in a cool, wet sheet and fan vigorously. Monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the person's body temperature drops to 101 to 102 degrees F. If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call a hospital emergency room for further instructions.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. A person with heat stroke is likely to be unconscious or unresponsive, so he or she cannot safely consume any liquids. Under no circumstances should you give any alcohol to a person with heat stroke or any heat illness."

Follow these preventive measures to avoid heat illnesses:

- Drink more fluids, and avoid beverages containing alcohol or caffeine
- When temperatures are extreme, stay indoors, ideally in an air-conditioned place
- Take a cool shower or bath, and reduce or eliminate strenuous activities during the hottest time of the day
- Protect yourself from the sun with a wide-brimmed hat, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher
- Never leave pets or people in a parked vehicle.

Individuals with heart problems, poor circulation, diabetes, a previous stroke or obesity are at greater risk of becoming sick in hot weather. The risk of heat-related illness may increase among people using medications for high blood pressure, nervousness or depression.

For more information, visit [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org).