



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Take extra precautions to prevent heat illnesses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The combination of record-breaking heat and humidity presently affecting Alabama can be deadly. The Alabama Department of Public Health advises citizens to be alert to the warning signals of heat illnesses.

People should drink plenty of water, stay in air-conditioned areas, and keep out of the sun. Individuals with heart problems, poor circulation, diabetes, a previous stroke or obesity are at greater risk of becoming sick in hot weather. Heat-related illnesses may increase among people using medications for high blood pressure, nervousness or depression. 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 or splash with cool water 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.

For more information, visit www.adph.org.