



HAMILTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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Health Commissioner Column

STAY COOL WHEN TEMPERATURES RISE

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – As we enter the summer months, many of us are spending time outdoors for exercise and leisure activities. When running, biking, fishing, working, or even sunbathing, people are in danger of heat-related illness. Heat exhaustion is a serious problem, and heat stroke can be fatal. As the temperature rises, it is important to understand and recognize ways to avoid heat-related illnesses.

Heat exhaustion or heat stress is the overheating of the body due to excessive loss of water. It can be caused by prolonged exposure to hot temperatures, limited fluid and/or insufficient dietary salt intake. Anyone can develop heat exhaustion during hot weather. Certain situations can lead to heat illness more readily; long stretches of hot days, recent illness, heavy/restrictive clothing, or working in a hot environment.

Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion:

- Headache
- Muscle cramps
- Intense thirst
- Excessive sweating
- Dizziness, fatigue, faintness
- Nausea, vomiting, upset stomach
- Slow weak, pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing

Anyone affected by heat exhaustion should get out of the sun and move to a cooler location immediately, loosen or remove clothing, apply ice packs to the neck, groin and armpits, and consume 1 to 2 quarts of fluids.

Heat stroke, opposed to heat exhaustion, can be fatal. The key sign of heat stroke is the loss of the ability to sweat, which happens when body temperature reaches 105 degrees. At this point, the body's brain and organ tissues begin to die. The primary cause of heat stroke is ignoring heat exhaustion. Other symptoms include hot, dry flushed skin, a fast or slow heart rate, confusion, loss of concentration, or seizures. This is a medical emergency. You should follow the same guidelines for treating heat exhaustion and also call 911.

Some basic planning measures and awareness can keep you and your family safe this summer. Prevent heat exhaustion and heat stroke by following these guidelines:

NEWS

- Plan outdoor activities in the early morning or late afternoon. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy stop what you are doing and go inside.
- Apply sunscreen. Skin cannot sweat through sunburn.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes and hats that allow air flow.
- Drink plenty of water. Don't wait until you're thirsty – your body may already be dehydrating.
- Avoid food and beverages that promote fluid loss, such as caffeine or alcohol.
- Never leave anybody, especially children, unattended in a locked car during hot weather. Car temperatures rise rapidly and can be deadly in minutes.

You can still enjoy the warm temperatures and sunshine this summer, but please take the proper precautions to help prevent heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

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Tim Ingram is the Health Commissioner for Hamilton County. Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 450,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.