



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## SIMPLE STEPS PREVENT HEAT RELATED ILLNESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Hot, humid weather is a hallmark of summertime in Tennessee. While activities of daily life often mean exposing ourselves to extreme heat, the Department of Health offers simple tips that can help reduce your risk of seasonal illness during the hot summer months.

Temperatures that soar into the 90s and beyond raise the risk for heat-related illness. Heat-related illnesses include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash. Signs of heat-related illness include dizziness, heavy sweating, muscle cramps, rapid heart beat, nausea, headaches and cold/clammy skin.

“Heat-related illnesses sicken people and claim lives every year, even though these problems are preventable,” said Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. “We urge Tennesseans to make smart choices about their exposure to extreme heat. Try to avoid going outside during the hottest part of the day, and be sure never to leave anyone unattended in a car.”

It’s also important to take steps to protect the very young and the elderly, who are at greater risk for health problems caused by extreme heat. People with chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and lung disease are also at an increased risk of heat-related illnesses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a few simple steps to avoid these preventable heat-related illnesses.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Don’t wait until you are thirsty to drink. Remember to consume non-alcoholic, low-sugar drinks in hot weather.
- **Replace salt and minerals.** Heavy sweating can deplete your body’s salt and minerals. Non-alcoholic drinks, like sports drinks, can help you replenish these reserves.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, as well as a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection. Wear SPF 15 or higher sunblock every day.
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully.** Try to limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours with rest breaks in shady areas, if available. UV rays are strongest and do the most damage during midday hours.
- **Pace yourself.** If you are unaccustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, start slowly and increase effort gradually. If your heart is pounding or you are gasping for breath, stop the activity and rest in a cool, shady area.

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- **Stay cool indoors.** If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the mall or library to cool off. Cool showers or baths, and keeping your stove and oven off are other ways to cool down inside.
- **Use the buddy system.** Partner with a friend and watch each other for signs of heat-related illness. Senior citizens are more susceptible, so if you know someone over age 65, check on him or her over the phone twice a day.

Heat stroke is the most life-threatening heat-related illness. Each year, about 400 people nationwide die from heat stroke. Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature, which rises quickly without the ability to cool down. If emergency treatment is not provided, heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability. Symptoms include body temperature above 103 degrees Fahrenheit; red, hot and dry skin without sweating; rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion and loss of consciousness.

Call for immediate medical help if you believe you are or another person is experiencing heat stroke. Do not give the victim any fluids to drink. While waiting on emergency assistance, get the victim to a shady area, cool him or her rapidly using cool water and monitor body temperature until it reaches 101 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit.

For more information about heat-related illnesses, including prevention and treatment tips, visit the CDC's Extreme Heat Safety Web site at [http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat\\_guide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp).

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