



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
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Hot Weather Poses Health Risks

As summer heat builds in many parts of Wisconsin, state health officials are urging everyone to be aware of the dangers associated with extreme heat and to take protective safety measures.

“Although most heat-related illnesses involve persons who are elderly or have chronic illnesses, we know that children, athletes, and outdoor workers are also at risk,” said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “Do not leave individuals – especially children and infants – or any pets unattended in cars for even brief periods of time. Even with windows cracked open, temperatures inside a car can rise to life-threatening levels in a matter of minutes.”

Sustained temperatures in excess of 90 degrees pose a risk of heat-related illness and death, especially when humidity levels exceed 35 percent. The risk is highest for older adults and individuals with chronic illnesses, or for individuals taking medications that inhibit perspiration and the body’s natural cooling process.

General symptoms of heat exhaustion include fainting, rash, fatigue and nausea. Skin may become clammy and moist or hot and dry. The onset of heat stroke can be rapid and may progress to life-threatening illness within minutes. If heat-related symptoms appear, immediate actions should be taken to reduce body temperature.

The following actions are recommended when temperatures are above 90 degrees:

- Drink more fluids during hot weather to avoid dehydration. Rapid weight loss may be a sign of dehydration.
- Spend the hottest part of the day in a cool, preferably air-conditioned place
- Do not plan strenuous activities during the warmest part of the day.
- Use fans to increase ventilation unless temperatures exceed 90° (at which point fans become ineffective in reducing heat-related illness)
- Take a cool shower, bath or sponge bath to reduce body temperatures. In addition, wet clothing has a cooling effect.
- Make frequent checks on the status of elderly or ill relatives or neighbors and move them to an air-conditioned environment during the hottest part of the day.

For more information on heat-related health concerns, visit

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/injuryprevention/WeatherRelated/Heat.htm>

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