



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heat Can Lead To Serious Health Problems

DHMH urges Marylanders to take precautions

BALTIMORE, MD (June 1, 2006) – It is hot. Those three little words have been heard in elevators and grocery stores, in parking lots and health clubs. Neighbors have discussed it over the fence or while walking the dog.

With that in mind, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) cautions Maryland citizens that serious health problems can develop from the conditions typically associated with Maryland summers. Of particular concern are **heatstroke** and **heat exhaustion**.

"It is important for everyone to take precautions," said DHMH Secretary S. Anthony McCann. "When it is hot, it is especially important for people to drink plenty of water and fruit juices so they remain hydrated."

Some segments of the population are affected more than others from hot weather.

"We are especially concerned about elderly people, young children, and those who are overweight," Secretary McCann said. "Heart disease, diabetes, respiratory illnesses and other chronic health conditions also increase an individual's risk."

Heatstroke is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, disorientation, delirium and coma. Onset of heatstroke can be rapid: a person can go from feeling apparently well to a seriously ill condition within minutes. Treatment of heatstroke involves the rapid lowering of body temperature, using a cool bath or wet towels. A heatstroke victim should be kept in a cool area; emergency medical care should be obtained by dialing 911.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heatstroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea, or headache. Victims may also vomit or

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faint. Heat exhaustion is treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

Hot weather tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids such as water and fruit juices to prevent dehydration -- be aware that alcohol can impair the body's sweat mechanism, as can fairly common medications such as antihistamines and diuretics;
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes;
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade or by wearing sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses;
- NEVER leave pets or young children in a car, even with the windows cracked;
- Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily; and
- Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should, if possible, take short breaks when feeling fatigued. Schedule physical activity during the morning or evening when it is cooler.

More information about heat-related illnesses is available by clicking on 'heat-related information' from the 'injury prevention and epidemiology division' link at www.fha.state.md.us/cphs.

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