



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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DISEASE CONTROL UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY May 13, 2008

To: All County Residents
From: Public Health Department
Subject: Prevention of Heat-Related Illness

To prevent heat-related illnesses when temperatures are extremely high, the Public Health Department is asking all county residents to keep the following tips in mind:

- **Drink cool, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverages.** Liquids that contain alcohol, caffeine or large amounts of sugar actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, very cold drinks can cause stomach cramps.
- **Stay out of the sun and, if possible, stay in an air-conditioned place.** Even a few hours spent in an air-conditioned place can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. If your home does not have air-conditioning, shopping malls and libraries are a good place to seek relief.
- **Take a cool shower or bath.** Electric fans may provide some comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90's, fans will not prevent heat-related illness.
- **Those at high risk for heat-related illness** are infants and young children, people aged 65 and older, people who have a mental illness and those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure. Check on older adults at least twice a day for signs of heat exhaustion. Children need more frequent watching.
- **Never leave infants, children or any pet in a closed, parked vehicle.**

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. It occurs when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. The signs and symptoms of heat stroke are as follows:

- An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F)
- Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of high temperatures. The signs and symptoms are as follows:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps

- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Headache
- Skin may be cool and moist
- Pulse rate may be fast and weak
- Breathing may be fast and shallow

If you see signs of severe heat stress, you may be dealing with a life-threatening emergency. Have someone call for immediate medical assistance while you begin cooling the affected person. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advise doing the following:

- Get the person to a shady area.
- Cool the person rapidly, using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the person in a tub of cool water or place them in a cool shower; spray the person with cool water from a garden hose; sponge the person with cool water
- Monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101°-102° F.
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

For more information on heat-related illness, visit the CDC's web site at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>