County Offers Tips on Surviving the Heat

When high temperatures and humidity in the summer months rise to dangerous levels, Montgomery County health officials encourage residents to take precautions to avoid heat-related illnesses. **Residents should be concerned when temperatures near 100° and heat indexes exceed 100°.**

Most at risk are young children, the elderly, and people with health problems such as asthma, who are susceptible to heat-related illnesses, such as heat stroke and exhaustion.

By taking the following precautions, residents can remain safe and comfortable during the hot days of summer:

- Stay indoors, whenever possible. Be careful to avoid strenuous activities that can result in overexposure to the sun, such as sports and gardening. If you must do a strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning before 9 a.m. Visit nearby air-conditioned buildings in your community if your home is not air-conditioned. These may include senior centers, movies theaters, libraries and shopping malls.
- When outdoors, wear proper protection from the sun. Light-colored clothing, a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen protection are recommended.
- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration, cramps, exhaustion or heat stroke can result from not drinking enough fluids. Water is the safest liquid to drink. Avoid drinks containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Never leave pets or young children in a car, even with the windows cracked. Check frequently on elderly relatives or neighbors and other at-risk individuals. Watch for signs of heat-related illness such as hot, dry skin; confusion; hallucinations; and aggression.

Knowing the symptoms of heat exposure can prevent serious heat illness from becoming life threatening. Should any of the following occur, get out of the heat, loosen any tight or heavy clothing, and drink plenty of water:

- Heat cramps: symptoms include painful muscle spasms, usually involving the abdominal muscles or legs;
- Heat exhaustion: first signs are cool, moist, pale or flushed skin, dizziness, nausea, headache and weakness; and
- Heat stroke: the most serious sign of overexposure. Symptoms include red, hot, dry skin, weak pulse, rapid breathing, and changes in consciousness. Seek emergency medical attention by calling 911.

Fans are available for distribution to frail elderly adults with disabilities and needy residents through the Department of Health and Human Services' Aging and Disability Services Information and Assistance Unit. Eligible residents who are having trouble coping with the heat should contact the Senior Information and Assistance Unit at 240-777-3000.

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