

Cool Down For A Healthy Summer

(NAPSA)—Although every summer we hear about athletes, children, the elderly, and others becoming ill or dying from exposure to heat, this year doesn't have to be the same. You can beat the heat by taking specific steps to protect yourself and others.

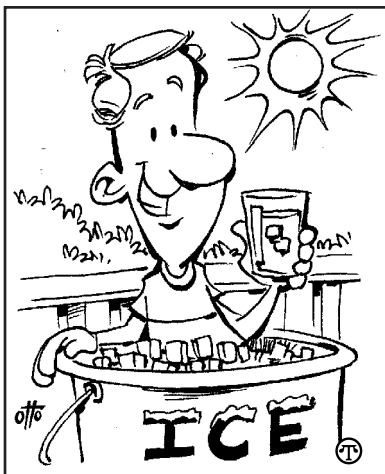
Who's at Risk?

In the United States, 7,421 people died from excessive heat during 1979-1998. Anyone exposed to high temperatures for a sustained period of time is at risk for heat-related illness (heat exhaustion or heat stroke [hyperthermia]) or death. At greater risk are the elderly, children, and people with certain medical conditions, such as heart disease. Some behaviors also put people at greater risk: drinking alcohol; taking part in strenuous outdoor physical activities in hot weather; and taking medications that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

What Are the Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness?

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include paleness, muscle cramps, fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and fainting. The skin may be cool and moist; sweating may or may not occur. The pulse rate will be fast and weak, and breathing will be fast and shallow. If untreated, heat exhaustion may progress to heat stroke.

Symptoms of heat stroke include a body temperature above 103°F; red, hot, and dry skin (no sweating); rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness. Heat stroke is a serious condition; even if treated, many people with heat stroke will die.



How Can You Prevent Heat-Related Illness?

Stay hydrated and cool. Drink plenty of hydrating fluids such as water; seek out air-conditioned spaces and spend even short periods of time there; wear light clothing; reduce activity; and plan outdoor activities for the cooler parts of the day. While electric fans may provide some comfort, they are not effective in cooling the body when the temperature and humidity are high. A cool shower or bath, or spending time in an air conditioned location such as a mall or movie theatre, is a more effective way to cool off.

During heat waves, check on the elderly, disabled, or homebound people to ensure their safety. Never leave children in cars or similar enclosed spaces, and make sure they aren't able to lock themselves in an enclosed space such as a car trunk.

For more information, go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb/extremeheat>.