

June 20, 2017

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Michele Bever, Executive Director, SHDHD
1-877-238-7595 / michele.bever@southheartlandhealth.org

SHDHD Urges Precautions For Heat

“We have experienced some pretty hot days recently with temperatures in the 90s, but this Wednesday, the first day of summer, is looking like it could top the 100 degree mark”, said Chip Volcek, Adams County Emergency Manager.

“During extreme heat we recommend you find your ‘cool place’ for relief from the heat.” advises Michele Bever, executive director for the South Heartland District Health Department. “Excessive heat exposure can cause illness and even death, but heat-related illness is preventable if people take precautions and properly cool themselves.”

Air conditioning is the number one protective factor against heat-related illness and death. “If your home is not air-conditioned, find some relief from the heat by seeking out public facilities that are air-conditioned, such as libraries, shopping malls, or senior centers,” says Bever. “If you work or play outside, take additional precautions to help your body keep itself cool.”

Some prevention tips to help your body beat the heat:

- Drink plenty water to keep your body hydrated. Stay away from alcoholic and high sugar drinks, which can actually increase your body’s fluid loss.
- Wear appropriate clothing including loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Apply sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher (sunburn interferes with your body’s ability to cool itself).
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully to limit activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Pace yourself, especially if you are not used to working or exercising outside. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath. STOP all activity, get into a cool place (at least into the shade) and rest. Watch for symptoms of light-headedness, confusion, or feeling weak or faint.
- Use a Buddy System when working or playing in the heat to monitor your co-worker’s or teammate’s condition and for them to do the same for you. Heat related illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness.

- Monitor those at high risk. If you know someone who is 65 years of age or older, check on them at least twice a day watching for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Others at risk of heat-related illness include infants and young children, people who are overweight, people who over-exert during work or exercise, people with chronic conditions (such as those with heart disease, high blood pressure, asthma or mental illness), or who take certain medications such as antidepressants or tranquilizers.
- Don't leave children or pets in parked cars. Even with the windows cracked open, the temperature inside a car can rise almost 20 degrees in the first 10 minutes putting anyone inside at risk for serious heat-related illness or even death.

“People suffer health-related illness when the body’s temperature control system is overloaded,” said Elizabeth Hardy, a public health nurse with South Heartland District Health Department. “The body normally cools itself by sweating. When the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly,” she said.

The result can be heat exhaustion, which is a milder form of heat-related illness, or heat stroke, the most serious heat-related illness.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency characterized by a body temperature of 105 degrees F or higher. “If an individual’s temperature exceeds 102 degrees F, seek emergency medical assistance after assisting them to cool in the shade or in an air conditioned building,” said Hardy.

“When we have extreme heat conditions, meaning summertime temperatures are substantially hotter and/or more humid than the average for South Central Nebraska this time of year, then we need to take precautions against heat-related illnesses,” Bever explained. “Identify your ‘cool place’, follow prevention tips, and help those most at risk.”

For more information visit the CDC’s website http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp or contact South Heartland District Health Department at 1-877-238-7595 or visit www.southheartlandhealth.org.

##