



## Tips on Heat-Related Illness

Is it hot enough for you yet? Summer has been brutally hot so far, and we are only just into the month of July. The heat is not only uncomfortable, it is debilitating and dangerous. The Climate Prediction Center continues to predict warmer than normal temperatures throughout the rest of this month. This area is still below normal for precipitation which is further aggravating the drought problems for the region.

If you happen to be out and about during these hot days, I want to give you some tips for preventing heat-related illness:

- Drink more fluids regardless of your activity level. **Don't** wait until you're thirsty to drink!
- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar. These actually cause you to lose more body fluid and dehydrate more quickly.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Although anyone can succumb to heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check on infants and young children, people aged 65 or older, and those who have mental illness. Additionally, check on those who are physically ill, especially those with heart disease or high blood pressure.

If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports drink can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.

- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Also be sure to apply sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- Use the “buddy system”! Partner with a friend and watch each other for signs of heat-related illness.

Heat exhaustion is caused by depletion of body fluids and usually occurs in extreme heat or when a person is unable to adapt to heat. Symptoms include weakness, nausea, and cramps. Loss of consciousness is also common. Heat stroke is a more serious condition that occurs when the body’s core temperature rises to dangerous levels; the body’s cooling system ceases to function properly. Perspiration, the body’s natural mechanism of evaporative cooling, ceases. This, in turn, can lead to damage of the brain and other organs. Symptoms of heat stroke include short, rapid breathing; fast pulse; lack of perspiration and confusion. Call 911 **IMMEDIATELY** if you or someone else exhibits these symptoms and take steps to get the person to a cooler area until help arrives. Be careful out there! Happy gardening!



*Christopher Cooper*