

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

During the month of July, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and the American Red Cross would like to remind you to be aware of heat related illness while having fun in the sun. Normally the body can cool itself down by perspiration (evaporating sweat) or letting heat escape through the skin. If the body does not cool itself down enough you may be susceptible to a heat-related illness. Anyone is at risk, although the elderly and the very young are at greatest risk. Heat exhaustion can become deadly if left untreated or ignored.

While enjoying your summer and trying to stay cool in the high temperatures, please keep in mind the following stages of heat-related illness.

First Stage: Heat Cramps: Muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion that usually involve the abdominal muscles or the legs. These painful cramps may be caused by a loss of water and salt from heavy sweating. If experiencing heat cramps, stop your activity, rest and drink small amounts of water or a sports drink. Gently stretch and massage the muscle. If no other signs of heat-related illness are present, you may resume activity.

Second Stage: Heat Exhaustion: This is less dangerous than a heat stroke and happens when the sweat does not evaporate as it should, possibly because of high humidity or too many layers of clothing. As a result, the body is not cooled properly. Signs of heat exhaustion include:

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity)
- Headache
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- The skin may or may not feel hot.

Last Stage: Heat Stroke: Also called sunstroke, is life-threatening. The temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. Body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Signs of heat stroke include:

- Vomiting
- Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness
- High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105°F)
- Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Rapid, shallow breathing

This is a medical emergency – call 911 immediately.

General Care for Heat-Related Emergencies include:

- Cool the body
- Give fluids
- Minimize shock

For more information about preventing heat-related illness and staying cool this summer, contact the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org or the Branch-Hillsdale-St Joseph Community Health Agency at www.bhsj.org or one of our four locations: Coldwater (517) 279-9561, Hillsdale (517) 437-7395, Sturgis (269) 659-4013, or Three Rivers (269) 273-2161

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