

With summer weather, here and temperatures on the rise, the Health Department is urging residents to take steps to avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

During these times of extreme heat and humidity residents should take extreme caution and prevention steps to ensure their safety from heat related illness.

Senior citizens, children and those with chronic conditions are extremely vulnerable to excessive heat.

To avoid health complications, follow these steps provided by the New Jersey Department of Health:

- Drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic beverages
- Make sure children and the elderly are drinking water, and ensure that persons with mobility problems have adequate fluids in easy reach
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays
- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection
- If you do not have air conditioning, spend time in air-conditioned places such as libraries, movies, malls or other public buildings during the hottest hours of the day. Check with your municipality to see if cooling centers are available.
- Wear loose and light-colored clothing. Wear a hat when outdoors.
- Reduce physical activity or reschedule it for cooler times of the day (early morning or evening)
- Don't leave children, a frail elderly or disabled person, or pets in an enclosed car -- not even for a minute -- as temperatures can quickly climb to dangerous levels
- Consult health care professionals regarding any medicine or drugs you are taking. Certain medications -- such as tranquilizers and drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease -- can increase the risk of heat-related illness.

Heat stroke will most likely have the following signs and symptoms: hot, dry skin, a high body temperature of 106 degrees or more, an absence of sweat and a rapid and strong pulse. Victims may become delirious or unconscious. Persons suffering from heatstroke should seek immediate medical attention.

The lesser illness is heat exhaustion. This may take several days of high temperatures to develop. Signs and symptoms are pale, clammy skin and sweating profusely. People might be fatigued, weak, dizzy and have headaches or sometimes cramps, but their temperature will be close to normal.

Residents should also take steps to protect pets during excessive heat:

- Keep pets indoors in air conditioned rooms during periods of extreme heat
- Never leave dogs or other pets in parked cars; the temperatures in parked cars rise rapidly and can reach dangerous levels in only a few minutes
- Limit exercise on hot days to early mornings and evenings when the temperatures are lower
- Provide ample cool water and shade to pets while they are outside
- If pets show signs of heatstroke (heavy panting vomiting, disorientation, collapse) seek immediate veterinary care; heatstroke is life threatening