

The Heat is On!

Tips and ideas on staying cool and safe this summer

FORT MYERS, Monday, June 28, 2010 — Summer has arrived and unleashed extremely hot and humid weather across Southwest Florida. Heat advisories are in effect as temperatures approach 100 degrees Fahrenheit, or higher, with little relief in sight. The American Red Cross has steps people can follow to stay safe during the heat wave.

What to do during the hottest summer days:

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids and avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Never leave children or pets alone in enclosed vehicles.
- Eat small meals and eat more often.
- Avoid extreme temperature changes.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Slow down, stay indoors and avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest part of the day.
- Use a buddy system when working in excessive heat.
- Take frequent breaks if you must work outdoors.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning, who spend much of their time alone or who are more likely to be affected by the heat.
- Check on your animals frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat. Ensure your animals have water and a shady place to rest.
- Have a plan for wherever you spend time— home, work and school—and prepare for the possibility of power outages.
- Know those in your neighborhood who are elderly, young, sick or overweight. They are more likely to become victims of excessive heat and may need help.
- If you don't have air conditioning, choose places to go to for relief from the heat during the hottest part of the day – schools, libraries, theaters, malls.
- Be aware that people living in urban areas may be at greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than are people living in rural areas.

How to help someone having trouble with the heat:

The extreme heat can cause physical difficulties which, in some instances, can be life-threatening. Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms in the legs or abdomen caused by exposure to high heat and humidity and loss of fluids and electrolytes. Heat cramps are often an early sign that the body is having trouble with the heat. To help someone with heat cramps:

- Get them to a cooler place and have them rest in a comfortable position. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids.

- Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse.

Heat exhaustion involves the loss of body fluids through heavy sweating during strenuous exercise or physical labor in high heat and humidity. Signs include cool, moist, pale or flushed skin, heavy sweating, headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness and exhaustion. If someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, you should:

- Move them to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths or towels to the skin. Fan the person. If they are conscious, give small amounts of cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Watch for changes in condition.
- If the person refuses water, vomits or begins to lose consciousness, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.

Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition in which a person's temperature control system stops working and the body is unable to cool itself. Signs of heat stroke include hot, red skin which may be dry or moist; changes in consciousness; vomiting; and high body temperature.

- Heat stroke is life-threatening. **Call 9-1-1** or the local emergency number immediately.
- Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the person's body by giving care as you would for heat exhaustion. If needed, continue rapid cooling by applying ice or cold packs wrapped in a cloth to the wrists, ankles, groin, neck and armpits.

You can find more information on what to do during a heat wave in the [Preparedness section](#) of www.redcross.org.

The Red Cross is dedicated to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world. It provides training in life-saving skills and mobilizes relief to victims of disasters in addition to assisting members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. For additional information about the Red Cross and the assistance it provides, making donations, registering for a class or volunteering, call 278-3401, or log on to arclcc.org. The American Red Cross of Lee County is a proud member of the United Way of Lee County.

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