



## Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

### **PREVENTION OF HEAT-RELATED INJURY**

**How often do heat-related deaths or injuries occur?** From 1979 to 2003 there were 8,015 deaths due to heat exposure in the United States. In 2001 there were 300 deaths from excessive heat exposure.

**How do heat-related injuries occur?** Heat-related illness occurs when the body is unable to compensate and properly cool itself which it normally does by sweating. Under some extreme conditions, sweating isn't enough and the person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures can damage the brain or other vital organs.

**What factors interfere with the body's ability to cool itself?** High humidity prevents the sweat from evaporating as quickly preventing the body from releasing enough heat. Other conditions that can result in heat-related illness include: age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, mental illness, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug and alcohol use.

**Who is at highest risk for heat-related illness?** The elderly, the very young, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases are at highest risk. However, even young, healthy people can suffer heat-related illness if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather.

#### **How can heat-related illness/injury be prevented?**

- Be aware of those who are at highest risk and check on them
- Drink plenty of fluids even if you are not very active. Don't wait until you are thirsty. If you are exercising in the heat, drink 16-32 ounces of cool fluids every hour.
- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar because these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Avoid very cold drinks because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Replace salt & minerals. Heavy sweating removes minerals from your body so must be replaced. Sports beverages can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat; however if you are on a low-salt diet, consult your doctor as to what to do.
- Wear appropriate clothing. Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Wear a wide-brimmed hat if out in the sun, along with sunglasses.
- Use sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. Look for products that say “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection”. Put it on 30 minutes before going out and reapply according to directions.
- Try to limit outdoor activities to morning & evening hours. Rest often in the shade. A siesta in the middle of the day is a good idea.
- Pace yourself if working or exercising in the heat. If you start having symptoms, stop all activity and rest in a cool area.
- Use air-conditioning, if possible and stay indoors. If you do not have air-conditioning at home, go to a mall, library or someplace where there is air-conditioning. Even a few hours in air-conditioning helps the body stay cooler when back out in the heat.

- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Minimize use of the stove or oven to keep the home cooler.
- Use the buddy system: have someone check on you, especially if you are over 65 or have a chronic illness. For workers in the heat, co-workers should check on each other.
- Do not leave children or pets in the car, even with the windows cracked open, even for a few minutes!! Car temperatures can rise 20 degrees in 10 minutes.
- Use common sense.

**What are some heat-related injuries?**

- Heat stroke. This is the most serious heat-related injury
- Less severe conditions include:
  - heat exhaustion
  - heat cramps
  - sunburn
  - heat rash

Descriptions and information about heat-related injuries will be outlined in the next insert.

Source: [http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat\\_guide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp)