



News Release

Shelby County Health Department
814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

NUMBER: **DATE:** Friday, July 20th, 2012
FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE **CONTACT:** Risk Communications Coordinator
www.shelbycountyttn.gov (901) 270-7179

Take Precautions to Prevent Heat Related Illnesses or Death

Memphis, TN. – Due to the current high temperatures and heat indices, the Shelby County Health Department is strongly advising residents to take precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses and death.

The Shelby County Health Department is actively working with Mayor Mark Luttrell's Office, the Shelby County Office of Preparedness, the Shelby County Fire Department and other valuable county resources to ensure citizens remain educated of and protected from the threats of extreme heat.

"During times of extreme heat, residents are strongly encouraged to take any and all necessary precautions to protect themselves and their family and neighbors from the adverse effects of heat," said Helen Morrow, M.D., Chief Health Officer for the Shelby County Health Department. **"We are particularly concerned with the very young, elderly, and those who suffer from certain medical conditions, especially those who have heart disease or high blood pressure. They tend to be at a greater risk."**

The Shelby County Health Department offers the following tips to help prevent heat-related illnesses:

- **Drink plenty of cool fluid, especially water; avoid alcohol and caffeine**
- **Wear light weight, weight colored clothing**
- **Limit outdoor activities during the hottest times of the day**
- **Pace yourself**
- **Stay cool indoors, especially in the heat of the day**
- **Never leave anyone in a car**
- **Monitor those at high risk**

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. It occurs when the body becomes unable to control its temperature: the body's temperature rises rapidly, the body loses its ability to sweat, and it is unable to cool down. Body temperatures rise to 106 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

Signs and Symptoms of Heat Stroke:

- High body temperature (above 103 degrees)
- Red, hot, dry skin (no sweating)
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness, nausea
- Mental confusion, shallow breathing and possible unconsciousness

Heat Exhaustion:

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after several days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids.

Signs and Symptoms of Heat Exhaustion:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Skin may be cool and moist
- Pulse rate fast and weak
- Breathing fast and shallow

The Health Department also emphasizes that during periods of intense and prolonged heat, it is especially important to check on elderly relatives and neighbors. The elderly are more likely to have health conditions or take medications that make them more vulnerable to the heat, and their bodies do not adjust well to sudden changes in temperature. If you have elderly friends or relatives, you can help protect them from heat-related illnesses by:

- Visiting at least twice a day to watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
- Take them to air-conditioned locations if they have transportation problems.
- Encouraging them to drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Encourage use of air-conditioning if available. If fans are in use instead of air-conditioning, windows must be open.

The Aging Commission of the Mid-South's Fan for Seniors Program uses volunteers to deliver fans to persons over the age of 65. Individuals may receive a fan every other year if they live in Shelby County and do not have functioning air conditioning. Those in need of a fan or wanting to make a donation to the program may contact the Aging Commission of the Mid-South at (901) 324-6333.

For more information about heat-related illnesses, including prevention and treatment tips, visit the CDC's Extreme Heat Safety Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp.

(END)