PREVENTING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Key Messages:

- **Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids (especially water and 100% fruit juice). Drink before you feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol, sugary drinks (e.g. soda), and drinks with caffeine (each are dehydrating).**
- **Get to a cool location for at least a few hours each day (such as a friend's house, library, shopping mall or other air-conditioned location).**
- **Cool off with cool water showers, baths or swimming.**
- **Avoid overexertion during the hottest parts of the day.**
- **Know the symptoms of heat-related illness and how to cool off quickly.**

Additional Information:

Heat can be dangerous, especially for the elderly, and also for young children (especially 0-5 years old), pregnant, obese, and those with certain medical conditions. Protect yourself during power outages (when air conditioning or coolers cannot be used) or while turning off air conditioners to conserve electricity. To prevent heat stroke (life threatening), heat exhaustion and other related health problems . . .

- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water and 100% fruit juice. Drink more fluids than usual, even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and sugary or caffeine-containing drinks, which are dehydrating. Very cold drinks can cause stomach cramps. During work or exercise in hot weather, drink 2-4 glasses (16-32 oz.) per hour.
- Go to a cool location. Move to the coolest location in your home (often a north-facing or shady side of the house or downstairs). If it is hot in your home, go to a friend's house, a shopping mall, the movies, the public library or other air-conditioned location for at least a few hours during the day. Shasta Senior Nutrition Sites are available for seniors to cool off.
- Dress to stay cool with loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Wear a wide-brimmed hat if you are out in the sun.
- Be on the lookout for signs of heat-related illness. Symptoms of heat stroke may include an altered mental state, unconsciousness, confusion, rapid pulse, red, dry and hot skin, and throbbing headache. Heat stroke is life-threatening and immediate medical attention must be sought while you begin cooling the victim (cool water onto body by hose, bath, or sponge).
- Symptoms of heat exhaustion may include heavy sweating, weakness, headache, nausea, fatigue, dizziness, lightheadedness, and pale skin. If symptoms of heat exhaustion occur, cool off immediately, drink plenty of fluids and seek medical attention. Also, seek medical attention for any heart-related symptoms. Heat exhaustion also can be a medical emergency if symptoms are severe, the victim has heart problems or high blood pressure, or if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour despite cooling measures.
- Use sunscreen of >15 SPF 30 minutes before going out (a sunburn makes it more difficult for your body to cool itself).
- Avoid overexertion and slow your pace during hot parts of the day. Save physically demanding activities for morning or evening hours when it is cooler.
- Cool off with frequent cool showers or baths. Go swimming. Keep damp washcloths in the refrigerator to cool yourself off with.
- Use a buddy system. Have a friend or family member call to check in on you twice a day during heat waves. Check on friends, family and neighbors who may be susceptible to the heat or who are medically frail.

- Check with a doctor or pharmacist about medications taken for high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, sleeping, thyroid, depression, nervousness, mental illness, insomnia, or poor circulation. Also talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you take over-the-counter antihistamines or aspirin. These medications may affect your body's ability to deal with the heat.
- Avoid hot and heavy meals. Avoid cooking to keep the house cooler (eat salads, fresh produce and other items that do not need to be cooked). If you bake, do so in the early morning.
- Do not leave infants, pets, or children in a parked car. The inside of cars can reach >140 degrees.
- Use a fan to pull cool air in or direct hot air out of the house.
- Fans directly on people are NOT effective when temperature reaches the high 90's or higher in preventing heat illness. Seek air-conditioning or cool shower or bath instead.
- Avoid smoking.
- Swamp cooler are not effective in temperatures over 105°. Go to an air-conditioned public place, a cooling center, or a friend's house for a few hours to cool off.

Keeping food safe during power outages:

- Keep the freezer and refrigerator doors closed as much as possible. A full freezer can stay at freezing temperatures for about 2 days (only 1 day if half-full).
- Some foods are still safe even if they have started to thaw (usually safe to refreeze items that still have ice crystals and that remained at 40 degrees F or below). Be cautious with meat, poultry, and dairy products. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Prepare for power outages by stocking up on shelf-stable foods, develop emergency freezer-sharing plans with a friend in another area, buy a cooler, and keep the freezer full (with extra bags of ice, frozen water in plastic containers, freeze-packs).
- Keep safe drinking water supplies on hand, especially if you have a well and need power to run the pump.

For more information:

- Heat related illness:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/
  - Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency: (530) 225-5591 or 1-800-971-1999 www.shastahhsa.net
  - Call your doctor or 9-1-1 if you have symptoms of heat related illness.
- Food safety when the power goes out:
  - USDA website: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/keeping_food_Safe_during_an_emergency/index.asp
  - USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-800-535-4555
- Preparing for power outages:
  - American Red Cross: (530) 244-8000
    Heat Wave Safety Checklist

Provided by Shasta County Public Health, 2650 Breslauer Way, Redding
(530) 225-5591

5/30/2014