



Kiowa County Health Department

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Health Officials Warn Residents of Heat-Related Illnesses

Summer is heating up, and as temperatures rise, so does the risk of heat-related illness. Each year, approximately 620 people die from heat-related illness in the United States.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and the Kiowa County Health Department reminds residents that heat-related illness can range from heat rash, heat cramps and heat exhaustion to hyperthermia (overheating) and heat stroke. Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to cool itself sufficiently, and it often results in severe organ damage or even death.

It is important to recognize the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and act quickly.

Heat Exhaustion

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Cold, pale, clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Feeling dizzy

Heat Stroke

- Body temperature of 103 degrees or higher
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Headache
- Nausea
- Feeling confused
- Feeling dizzy
- Unconsciousness

A heat stroke is a medical emergency. If any signs are recognizable, call 911 immediately and move the person to a cooler environment. Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or even a bath.

The OSDH offers the following safety tips for preventing a heat-related illness:

Stay indoors. Stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home is not air-conditioned, visit the mall or public library, or contact the local health department for the location of a heat-relief shelter in the area.

Stay hydrated. Increase your fluid intake to two to four glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids every hour. If you are on water pills or restricted fluid limit, consult a physician first. Avoid liquids which contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar; they contribute to the loss of more body fluid. Very cold drinks can cause stomach cramps and should be avoided as well.



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Dress appropriately. Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing as well as sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher and broad spectrum or UVA/UVB protection.

Closely monitor those who are more vulnerable. Infants, children, people older than 65 years of age, those with mental illness, outdoor workers, athletes and those with physical illnesses such as heart disease or high blood pressure should be closely observed.

Never leave anyone in a vehicle. Never leave anyone, especially children and the elderly, in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are cracked.

For more information on summer heat safety, contact the Kiowa County Health Department at (580) 726-3316 or OSDH Injury Prevention Service at (405) 271-3430 or visit <http://ips.health.ok.gov>.

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