Heat Related Illness

- Cooling Tip of the Week -

If you know you'll be working in hot weather drink plenty of water starting the night before to hydrate your body.

NEW: Click here for the latest *Heat Related Illnesses* Informational Brochure (for printing out and distribution)

Exposure to excessive heat can cause illness, injury and death. Heat-related deaths and illness are preventable yet annually many people succumb to extreme heat. Approximately 400 people die each year from exposure to heat due to weather conditions, and many more people die from health conditions that are worsened by exposure to excess heat.

People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies are unable to compensate and properly cool themselves. The body normally cools itself by sweating. But under some conditions, sweating just isn't enough. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs. Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. When the humidity is high, sweat will not evaporate as quickly, preventing the body from releasing heat quickly.

Even short periods of high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Doing too much on a hot day, spending too much time in the sun or staying too long in an overheated place can cause heat-related illnesses. Know the symptoms of heat disorders and overexposure to the sun, and be ready to give first aid treatment. Click here to find out more about these symptoms and general information on prevention tips related to heat and health:

Most heat-related deaths occur during the summer months. The elderly, the very young, and people with chronic health problems are most at risk. Air conditioning is the leading protective factor against heat-related illness and death. By knowing who is at risk and what prevention measures to take, heat-related illness can be prevented.

Your best defense against heat-related illness is PREVENTION. Staying cool and making simple changes in your fluid intake, activities, and clothing during hot weather can help you remain safe and healthy. Here are some hot weather prevention tips:

-Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink 2 to 4 glasses (16-32 oz.) of cool fluids each hour. Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him

how much you should drink while the weather is hot.

- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a cooling center, if opened (Merced County Cooling Centers will open only during extreme heat conditions), or the shopping mall or public library - even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Use your stove and oven less to maintain a cooler temperature in your home.

-Replace salts and minerals, heavy sweating removes salt and minerals from the body. These are necessary for your body and must be replaced. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, non -alcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. However, if you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage or taking salt tablets.

-Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar - these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.

-Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.

-Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.

-NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.

-Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on:

Infants and young children
People aged 65 or older
People who have a mental illness
Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure

-Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching.

-Use a buddy system when working in the heat, check on the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness. If you are 65 years or older, have a friend or relative call to check on you twice a day during a heat wave. If you know someone in this age group, check on them at least twice a day.

For More Information Click the Subjects Below:

Extreme Heat Prevention Guide	Heat Stress In The Elderly	About Extreme Heat

Summertime Blackouts	**Información en español**	**Frequently Asked Questions**

Useful Links:

Be Prepared California - Extreme Heat

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Extreme Heat

FEMA Extreme Heat - Are you Ready Guide

American Red Cross - Heat Related Illness Health & Safety Tips

Merced County Home	**Health Dept. Home**