



# JOHNSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

dedicated to the prevention of disease and promotion of wellness for our community.

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## PREVENTION OF HEAT RELATED ILLNESS

(Olathe, KS –June 18, 2009) The Johnson County Health Department suggests that with temperatures rising in the summer months, people should be aware of the type and symptoms of heat-related illness and how to prevent them.

- **Heat stress** includes feelings of faintness, painful muscle spasms, cramps, and a prickly heat feeling caused by a skin rash from clogged pores. This is caused by lack of fluids and minerals in the body.
- **Heat exhaustion** is more serious than heat stress; symptoms include headache, dizziness, cool/clammy skin, muscle fatigue, chest pain, breathing problems, and nausea.
- **Heat stroke** is the most serious form of heat-related illness, and is life-threatening. Symptoms include headache, hot & dry skin, a temperature of 103 degrees or higher, rapid and shallow breathing, disorientation, seizures, and changes in consciousness. If an individual is showing these symptoms, cool them quickly with cold, wet sheets or a cool bath, and take them to the nearest hospital.

Lougene Marsh, Director of the Johnson County Health Department recommends the following tips to stay cool during the long, hot summer months:

- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water, juices, and sport drinks. Avoid caffeinated drinks, coffee and alcohol, as they dehydrate the body. Drink at least a gallon of water a day while spending time outdoors.
- Dress children lightly, and check on them often when they play outside. They should take frequent trips indoors to cool off and drink water. Young children should wear sunscreen of SPF 50 to reduce the risk of sunburn. Infants should spend the least amount of time possible in the sun.
- Schedule outdoor activities in the morning and evening, and try to stay in the shade while outdoors.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a 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.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Take a cool shower or bath to cool off.

Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some individuals are at greater risk than others. Be sure to check regularly on infants/young children, people 65 or older, people who have a mental illness and those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.

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