



AMERICAN MEDICAL RESPONSE

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HEAT SAFETY

AMR Offers Heat Safety Tips for the Public

(Stockton, CA) – The sun has begun to show its strength in the San Joaquin region, and the temperatures will only increase as we progress further into the hottest months of the summer. Therefore, American Medical Response, in an effort to prevent heat-related injuries, has provided the following heat safety tips.

Never leave a child or elderly person unattended in a motor vehicle, even with a window slightly open. This applies to pets as well. On a typically sunny day, the temperature inside a vehicle can reach potentially deadly levels within a few minutes.

When restraining children in a car that has been parked in the heat, check to make sure seating surfaces and equipment (car seats and seat belt buckles) are not overly hot.

What are the warning signs of a heat stroke? An extremely high body temperature (above 103°F); red, hot and dry skin (no sweating); rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness.

Who is at greatest risk for heat-related illness? Infants; children up to four-years-old and adults age 65 and older; people who are overweight; people who are ill; or people on certain medications.

What to do if you see someone with the warning signs of a heat stroke: Call for immediate medical assistance; move the victim to a shady area; cool the victim rapidly, using whatever methods you can – immerse the person in a cool shower or bath, spray with cool water from garden hose, sponge the person with cool water, or if the humidity is low, wrap the victim in a wet sheet and fan him/her vigorously; monitor body temperature and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to 101-102°F; do not give the victim alcohol to drink.

During hot weather you need to drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. Avoid drinks containing alcohol or caffeine because they will actually cause you to lose more fluid.

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What is the best clothing for hot weather or a heat wave? Wear as little clothing as possible while at home. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. When going outdoors, apply sunscreen 30 minutes prior, and continue to reapply. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool itself and causes a loss of body fluids.

Can medications increase the risk of heat-related illness? Yes. The risk may increase for those using: psychotropics (e.g. haloperidol or chlorpromazine), medications for Parkinson's disease because they can inhibit perspiration, and tranquilizers (e.g. phenothiazines, butyrophenones and thiozanthenes.)

How can people protect their health when temperatures are extremely high? Remember to keep cool and use common sense. Drink plenty of fluid, replace salts and minerals, wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen, pace yourself, stay cool indoors, schedule outdoor activities carefully, use a buddy system to monitor those at risk and adjust to the environment.

Sources: National Safe Kids Campaign and the National Center for Environmental Health.

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