

# Know What to Do:

## Heat Emergencies



### **Extreme Heat**

Extreme temperatures can pose serious and potentially fatal health problems. Heat-related illnesses can be prevented by staying cool and drinking plenty of liquids.

### **What is a heat advisory?**

The National Weather Service issues a heat advisory when a heat index of 105 to 115 is expected for at least three hours a day, or if nighttime lows are expected to remain above 80 for at least two consecutive nights.

### **Who is at risk from heat-related illnesses?**

The majority of victims are typically older individuals and other people with pre-existing and chronic medical conditions. Others at greater risk from extreme temperatures include pregnant women, children, people who are taking certain regular medications, individuals who work in a high-heat environment, people engaged in strenuous physical activity and people who are mentally ill. However, even young, healthy individuals are susceptible.

### **What problems can arise from heat?**

Two major types of heat-related illness exist. Heat exhaustion is non-life-threatening; heat stroke is potentially fatal.

### **What are the signs of heat exhaustion?**

Early warning signs of heat exhaustion include decreased energy, slight loss of appetite, faintness, light-headedness and nausea. Seek a cool place, drink fluids (non-alcoholic), remove excess clothing and rest. Heat stress needs attention, but it is not a medical emergency.

### **What are the signs of heat stroke?**

Serious signs that indicate a medical emergency and require immediate medical attention include unconsciousness, rapid heartbeat, throbbing headache, dry skin, chest pain, mental confusion, irritability, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle cramps, staggering and difficulty breathing. Dial 9-1-1, move the heat-stressed person to a cool area and remove his or her excess clothing. Spray the individual with water and fan him or her until help arrives.

### **What can you do to reduce the risk of heat-related illness?**

Air conditioning is the best defense against extreme heat, even for just a few hours a day. Taking a cool shower or bath can also provide some relief. People engaging in outdoor activities during this type of weather should have access to shade, water and/or sports beverages, cooling areas, and sunscreen.