When It’s a Scorcher: Prevent Heat-Related Illnesses

Richland County Health residents got a taste of hot weather in June, but heat and humidity usually rise during the later summer months. Richland Public Health urges residents to use extra care to avoid heat-related illness.

People suffer heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion when the body’s temperature-control system is overloaded. Sweating is the body’s natural way of cooling itself. In some situations, especially in periods of high humidity, sweating alone will not provide an adequate release of body heat.

Conditions that can limit the body’s ability to regulate temperature in hot weather are old age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn and drug and alcohol use. Among those at highest risk for heat stroke or heat exhaustion are:

- Infants and children up to 4 years old.
- People 65 and older.
- People who are overweight.
- People who over-exert during work or exercise.
- People who are ill or on certain medications.

Friends and neighbors are urged to periodically check on the elderly and those with illnesses, as they are among the highest-risk groups for heat-related problems.

Know the Signs of Heat Exhaustion

- Remember, heat-related symptoms can come on quickly.
- Symptoms of heat exhaustion are: heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or fainting. People experiencing these symptoms should be moved to a cool, shady or air-conditioned area, and provided cool, non-alcoholic beverages.
- Remove layers of clothing, if possible.

Know the Signs of Heat Stroke

- Heat stroke is a potentially life-threatening condition, characterized by: a body temperature of 103 degrees or higher; red, hot and dry skin with no sweating; rapid pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; unconsciousness; and gray skin color.
- People experiencing heat stroke need immediate medical assistance.
- Before help arrives, begin cooling the victim by any means possible, such as spray from a garden hose or by placing the person in a cool tub of water.

For tips to beat the heat, see the Summer Safety page at richlandhealth.org. And, please, don’t forget your pets: consider walking with your pets in the early morning before it gets too hot; make sure pets have lots of water and a covered area to get out of the sun and cool down.

Be sure to see the information on the dangers of children left in cars on the reverse side of this report.

Public Health Policies Have Prevented Hundreds of Millions of Coronavirus Infections

The alarming spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) last winter presented a profound threat to nations around the world. Many government leaders responded by shutting down all non-essential activities, implementing policies public health officials were hopeful could slow the highly infectious virus.

The shutdown came at a heavy cost for the U.S. and global economies. It’s also taken a heavy personal toll on many of us, disrupting our daily routines—getting children off to school, commuting to the office or workplace, getting together with friends and family, meeting face to face to plan projects, eating out, going to the gym—and causing lots of uncertainty and frustration. As difficult as the shutdowns have been, new research shows that without these public health measures, things would have been much, much worse. According to a study published recently in the journal Nature, the implementation of containment and mitigation strategies across the globe prevented or delayed about 530 million coronavirus infections across six countries—China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, France, and the United States. Take a moment to absorb that number—530 million. Right now, there are 9 million cases documented across the globe. (continued on back)

Don’t Leave Children Unattended in Cars

Heatstroke (body temperature exceeds 104°) is caused by prolonged exposure to high temperatures. The medical symptoms include dizziness, disorientation, agitation, confusion, sluggishness, seizure, hot dry skin that is flushed but not sweaty, loss of consciousness, rapid heart beat, and hallucinations. A core body temperature of 107° can be lethal.

Heatstroke is a particular problem for children. Their thermoregulatory systems are not as efficient as an adult’s and their body temperatures warm at a rate 3 to 5 times faster than an adult’s.

Children being left in cars is the most common reason for childhood death due to heatstroke. Here’s the number of U.S. heatstroke deaths for children left in cars:

2020: 5 (through June 23); and for the last four years, 2019: 52; 2018: 53; 2017: 44; 2016: 39. Since 1998 to present: 854. Average per year since 1998: 39 or one every nine days. (see: http://www.noheatstroke.org)

Sadly, the most common reason for a child death from vehicular heatstroke is the child was “forgotten” by the caregiver.

Temperatures inside a car even on a mild day (70°) can rise as much as 43° in an hour. Cracking the window does little to help. On a very hot day, temperatures of some objects in a car (dashboard) can rise to 200°.

SAFETY FIRST
• Never leave a child unattended in a car; not even for a minute.
• If you see an unattended child in a car, call 9-1-1.
• Be sure that all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading.
• Make “look before you lock” a routine whenever you get out of the car.

Remember: “Beat the Heat; Check the Back Seat.”

COVID-19 Infections Prevented

As we continue to try to understand and thwart this new virus and its damage to so many aspects of our personal and professional lives, these new findings add context, comfort, and guidance about the present circumstances. They tell us that individual sacrifices from staying home and canceled events contributed collectively to a huge, positive impact on the world.

Now, as various communities start cautiously to open up, we should continue to practice social distancing, mask wearing, and handwashing. This is not the time to say that the risk has passed. We are all tired of the virus and its consequences for our personal lives, but the virus doesn’t care. It’s still out there. Stay safe, everyone!

Dr. Francis Collins
National Institutes of Health

VITAL STATISTICS

The Vital Statistics division maintains records of all births and deaths in Richland County since 1908. For information on obtaining a birth or death certificate, check the website at richlandhealth.org or call 419-774-4500.

For May: 0  For 2020 to date: 0
Total Babies registered in Richland County

Infant Mortality: Richland County
For May: 0  For 2020 to date: 0
Infant mortality is defined as the death of a baby before his or her first birthday. Infant deaths are considered an important indicator of the overall health of a society. Deaths to residents occurring outside of Richland County are not reflected in county death statistics. KNOW the SAFE SLEEP ABCs: Alone, on Back, in a Crib.

CALLING THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Main Number ……… 419-774-4500
Public Health Clinic ……… 419-774-4700
Public Health Nursing ……… 419-774-4540
Environmental Health ……… 419-774-4520
Community Health Sciences ……… 419-774-4761
WIC ……… 419-774-4560

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED