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To: Local Media  
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Please publish the attached article as soon as possible. If you have any questions, you may call me at the above number. Thank you.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Heat Can Make You Sick

Summer is upon us, and the heat and humidity have been extreme in the state of Connecticut. Local residents have found relief in cooling centers and air conditioned facilities in the area. Although many people look forward to summer fun, it is important to recognize that the combination of rising temperatures and high dew points increase the likelihood of heat-related illness.

Temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit can place an abnormal stress on the body, resulting in risks to health. This is especially true when hot weather continues for several days, or if it is combined with high humidity. Some of the factors influencing the likelihood of developing heat-related health problems include air movement, amounts of physical activity, the type of clothing being worn, as well as humidity and temperature. Each year, hundreds of people in the United States die from heat-related temperature and the humidity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 8,015 people died from the heat from 1979-2003.

Heat stress is the term used for the strain placed on the heart and blood vessels during hot weather when the body is attempting to maintain normal temperature. It is important to note that while anyone can get sick from the heat, there are certain groups that are more susceptible than others. Individual who are medically unfit, overweight, suffer from heart disease, and those who abuse drugs and alcohol. Also, workers in certain professions who have not become used to the heat gradually are at increased to risk. Some medications increase the risk of heat-related illness and age alone is a risk factor, with about half of heat-related deaths comprised of the elderly.

Humidity is important to consider when assessing risk of heat-related issues. When the air is saturated with moisture, little to no evaporation occurs, making it harder for the body to cool itself through sweating. As a result, the body stores the excess heat, raising the core temperature and increasing the heart rate. Heat exhaustion sets in and physical symptoms begin to manifest themselves, such as loss of concentration and irritability.

Other symptoms of heat exhaustion include fatigue, weakness, increased sweating, nausea, headache, and clammy skin. Body temperature may increase slightly or not at all and fainting may occur. Because so much fluid is lost through increased sweating, dehydration frequently precedes or accompanies heat exhaustion. Symptoms of dehydration include dry lips and tongue, lack of energy, muscle cramps and bright-colored or dark urine. To counteract the effects of heat exhaustion, the affected person should move to a cool area and lie flat with the head a little lower than the rest of the body. Fluids should be replaced, preferably by drinking a beverage that contains electrolytes, including many of the sports drinks that are available now.

If heat exhaustion and dehydration are not treated, heat stroke may occur. This is a very serious health problem that requires medical attention. Signs of heat stroke include lack of sweating, hot, dry skin, high body temperature (104 degrees F or higher), throbbing headache, dizziness, chest pain, exhaustion, rapid heartbeat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, severe muscle cramps, rapid and shallow breathing, mental changes, confusion, delirium, loss of

consciousness, convulsions, and even coma. Death will occur if heat stroke is not treated. While waiting for medical personnel to arrive, a person suffering from heat stroke should be moved to a cool location if possible, or the victim's clothing may be soaked and he or she should be fanned to aid the cooling process. The individual can also be immersed in cool water or wrapped in cool, wet sheets to cool the body down.

Other heat-related issues include heat cramps and heat rash. Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms that occur after prolonged exposure to heat and excessive sweating, with tired muscles being the most susceptible. Drinking plenty of liquids, including water and sports drinks may relieve the cramps, because the body is being replenished. However, if the cramps are severe, they may require medical attention and the administration of intravenous (IV) saline solution.

Heat rash usually occurs in hot, humid environments where sweat is not easily evaporated by the skin. Once the rash develops, it can reduce the body's ability to sweat, further reducing the body's ability to cool itself and tolerate heat. To treat a heat rash, the affected area should be cleansed and allowed to dry completely, as an infection may occur if not treated well. Lotion, such as calamine lotion, may be used to relieve the itch and irritation.

Since heat can cause so many health problems, knowing how to reduce the effects of excessive heat may prevent illness. The following precautions are recommended:

1. Drink plenty of water, even if you are not thirsty. Avoid beverages that contain alcohol and caffeine, which can lead to dehydration.
2. Wear loose fitting, light colored clothing that reflects the sun's radiant heat.
3. If you work or play in the sun, take a break in the shade every 30 minutes.
4. Avoid hot, heavy meals. Try to complete any necessary cooking during the coolest times of the day.
5. Use air-conditioning whenever possible. If you do not have air-conditioning at home, go someplace that is air-conditioned for a few hours. Malls, restaurants, movie theatres, and public libraries can provide welcome retreats from the heat.
6. Use electric fans; circulating indoor air aids in the evaporation of heat from the skin's surface. Take cool baths and showers. The body cools down 25 times faster in water than in air.
7. Reduce physical activity, especially during the hottest times of the day (usually between 10am to 4pm).
8. When outdoors, wear wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses that provide UV protection for 99 to 100% of UV rays, and sun block with an SPF rating of at least 30 that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Stay in the shade as much as possible and keep babies out of the sun.
9. If you live alone, are elderly, or have chronic medical conditions, ask a friend or relative to check on you regularly. A phone call each day can be useful to alert someone if you are not well.
10. NEVER leave children or pets alone in cars.

Knowing the different types of heat stresses and how to prevent injury or death is key during the summertime. For further information about this or other health related topics, call the Central Connecticut Health District at 860-721-2822 or visit [www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org).