



NEWS RELEASE

Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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BURSTEIN URGES PRECAUTIONS DURING EXCESSIVE SUMMER HEAT

High Temperatures, Humidity Can Lead Health Emergencies

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein today urged residents to take extra precautions during hot weather to avoid heat-related health emergencies such as heatstroke, heat exhaustion and heat cramps.

“It’s very important to plan ahead and be ready for hot weather, particularly for the very young and the very old,” said Burstein. “Try to drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids, wear loose-fitting clothing, and try to be in an air-conditioned or shady area as much as possible. Also, try to avoid overwork during the hottest parts of the day, such as the afternoon.”

Residents are encouraged to be aware of the warning signs of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Heat cramps are painful, involuntary muscle spasms that usually occur during heavy exercise in hot environments. Inadequate fluid intake often contributes to heat cramps. Muscles most often affected include those in the calves, arms, abdomen, and back. If you suspect heat cramps: Rest briefly and cool down; drink clear juice or an electrolyte-containing sports drink; practice gentle, range-of-motion stretching and massage of the affected muscle group; if cramps don’t go away within one hour, call your doctor.

Heat exhaustion can range in severity from mild heat cramps to heat exhaustion to potentially life-threatening heatstroke. Signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion often begin suddenly, sometimes after excessive exercise, heavy perspiration, and inadequate fluid intake. Symptoms may include: feeling faint, nausea, heavy sweating, ashen appearance, rapid, weak heartbeat, low blood pressure, cool and moist skin, and low-grade fever. If you suspect heat exhaustion: get the person into a shady or air-conditioned area; lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly; loosen or remove the person’s clothing; have the person drink cool water (not iced) or a sports drink containing electrolytes; cool the person by sponging them with cool water and fanning; monitor the person carefully.

Heatstroke, which is similar to heat cramps and heat exhaustion, often results from heavy work in hot weather. Risk factors for this potentially life-threatening condition are age (older adults), obesity, dehydration, cardiovascular disease, alcohol use, and certain medications. Signs and symptoms may include: body temperature of more than 104 degrees; rapid heartbeat; rapid and shallow breathing; elevated or low blood pressure; cessation of sweating; irritability, confusion or unconsciousness; fainting

(which may be the first sign in older adults). If you suspect heatstroke: move the person out of the sun and into a shady or air-conditioned area; dial 911; cool the person by covering him with damp sheets or by spraying with cool water; direct air onto the person with a fan or newspaper.

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