

HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES HEAT ADVISORY

With hot and humid weather forecast and temperatures expected to reach or exceed 90 degrees in parts of the county for the next three days the Westchester County Health Department is issuing a heat advisory. As temperatures rise, residents are advised to avoid strenuous activity, drink plenty of non-alcoholic, un-caffeinated beverages and take precautions to prevent heat-related illness.

Heat stroke is a serious and life-threatening condition that claims many lives nationwide each year. Symptoms include hot red, dry skin, shallow breathing, a rapid, weak pulse, and confusion. Anyone suffering from heat stroke needs to receive emergency medical treatment immediately. Call 911 if you suspect heat stroke and immediately cool the overheated person while waiting for emergency help to arrive.

While less dangerous than heat stroke, heat exhaustion also poses concerns. Seniors, children up to age four, people who are overweight or who have high blood pressure and those who work in hot environments are most at risk. Signs include headache, nausea or vomiting, dizziness and exhaustion, as well as cool, moist, pale or flushed skin. People suffering from heat exhaustion should be moved out of the sun and have cool, wet cloths applied to their skin.

The White Plains Senior Center, located at 65 Mitchell Place, is open to White Plains senior citizens from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The White Plains Public Library, located at 100 Martine Avenue, is open to all White Plains residents. Library hours are: Mon-Thurs, 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.; Fri 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Sat & Sun, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Health Department recommendations to prevent heat-related illnesses:

- Drink two to four glasses of water per hour during extreme heat, even if you aren't thirsty.
- Limit any strenuous activity and exercise, especially during the sun's peak hours from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Take frequent breaks and drink lots of water if you work outside.
- Exercise when it is cooler, during early morning hours or in the evening.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and sugary drinks. These cause you to lose more body fluid.
- Stay indoors, ideally in an air-conditioned place.
- If your house or apartment isn't air-conditioned, try spending a few hours at a shopping mall, public library, movie theater or supermarket. A few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

Some other ideas:

- Take a cool shower or bath and reduce or eliminate strenuous activities during the hottest time of day.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to reflect heat and sunlight.

- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, and by using a broad spectrum sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher.
- NEVER leave anyone - a person or animal - in a closed, parked vehicle. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle can quickly exceed 140° F, which is life-threatening.
- Neighbors should check on elderly neighbors to make sure they are safe.
- Bring pets inside and be sure to provide them with plenty of water.

Elevated heat and humidity can also lead to unhealthy ozone levels. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation forecasts daily ozone conditions on its website, <http://www.dec.ny.gov>, for the New York Metropolitan area, which includes Westchester County. Air quality updates are also provided daily on the New York State Air Quality Hotline at [1-800-535-1345](tel:1-800-535-1345). Ozone is a gas produced by the action of sunlight on organic air contaminants from automobile exhausts and other sources. Significant exposure to ozone in the air has been linked with adverse health effects. These may include nose and throat irritation, respiratory symptoms and decreases in lung function.

People who experience these symptoms should speak with a healthcare provider. Those who may be especially sensitive to the effects of ozone exposure include the very young, those who exercise outdoors or are involved in strenuous outdoor work and those with pre-existing respiratory problems such as asthma. When ozone levels are elevated, the Westchester County Department of Health recommends limiting strenuous physical activity outdoors to reduce the risk of adverse effects.