



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROTECT YOURSELF DURING SUMMER HEAT

High Temperatures, Sunny Skies Can Cause Dangerous Situations

St. Charles County, Missouri – Heat waves, like the one forecasted for the St. Louis Metropolitan Area this week, can cause dangers to people, animals and infrastructure. Extreme heat and bright sunlight can lead to heat-related illnesses — especially in young children, the elderly and those who may have difficulties in caring for themselves.

“Heat illness occurs when the body loses its ability to regulate body temperature,” said Gil Copley, director of the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment.

“Normally, the body can keep our temperature in the neighborhood of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. The higher the surrounding temperature rises, the harder it is for us to accommodate it and to maintain our body temperature at a safe level.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cautions that around 100 Americans die each year from the heat, and that many more suffer through over-exertion and stress. Taking simple steps in advance can keep you and your family safe during a heat wave:

- Drink more fluids, regardless of your activity level. Do not wait until you’re thirsty to drink.
- Don’t drink liquids containing alcohol or large amounts of sugar, as these can actually cause your body to lose even more fluids.
- Stay indoors (in an air-conditioned location) whenever possible. Please call 2-1-1 from a land-line telephone or visit www.health.mo.gov to find heat-relief shelters in your area.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing
- DO NOT leave anyone or any animals in a closed, parked car, as interior temperatures can grow rapidly during a hot day

In addition to dangers from high temperatures, bright, sunny skies can damage your skin. Overexposure to the sun may cause severe sunburn and may lead to skin cancer, which is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Avoiding peak periods (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) when ultraviolet (UV) rays are strongest is the best way to minimize your risk, but taking other steps adds to your protection. Using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher on all exposed areas will protect from UVA and UVB rays, but this sunscreen must be continually re-applied — especially after excessive sweating or time in the pool. Wearing clothing like wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts and long pants will cover skin to add protection. Be aware that sunscreen can expire within three years of purchase and should be discarded after this expiration date or if exposed to excessive temperatures. Sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays are necessary to protect your eyes from the potentially damaging effects of UV rays.

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