



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Lara Kohl
lkohl@medstar911.org
(682) 225-7113 (cell)
(817) 632-0507 (office)

90 Days of Summer Safety: Preventing Heatstroke

July 10, 2009 (Fort Worth, Texas) As temperatures in Fort Worth continue to top 100 degrees this summer, the number of heat-related emergency medical calls increase. So far this season, MedStar EMS has responded to 125 heat-related medical emergencies. While longer days and warmer weather makes more time outdoors appealing, prolonged or intense exposure to hot temperatures can cause heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

“Heat exhaustion occurs when the body loses large amounts of water and salt through excessive sweating, particularly through hard physical labor or exercise,” said Dr. Jeff Beeson, Associate Medical Director for MedStar EMS in Fort Worth. This loss of essential fluids can disturb circulation and interfere with brain function. Children and the elderly are especially susceptible, Dr. Beeson added.

Heatstroke is a life-threatening problem that occurs when the body suffers from long, intense exposure to heat and loses its ability to cool itself. Heatstroke occurs when the body fails to regulate its own temperature and body temperature continues to rise.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include flu-like symptoms such as paleness, sweating, nausea, and vomiting.

“Often, we respond to people who are going about their regular work or daily activities, but don’t realize how quickly heat can affect them,” said Sean Burton, a Paramedic with MedStar EMS. “If you’re going to be doing anything outdoors during the high-temperature summer months, we recommend drinking plenty of water and frequently cooling off in the shade or indoors.”

Untreated heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke suddenly and cause unconsciousness within minutes. Some of the most common signs of heatstroke include vomiting, hot, flushed, dry skin, rapid heart rate, decreased sweating, shortness of breath, decreased urination, increased body temperature (104 to 106 degrees Fahrenheit), confusion, delirium or loss of consciousness or convulsions.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency. If you or someone you know starts experiencing any of the symptoms above, immediately call 9-1-1.

While heatstroke and heat exhaustion are common this time of year, they can be easily prevented.

Hydrate: Drink plenty of water during the day, especially if you are engaged in any strenuous activity. Sports drinks are a good choice if you're exercising or working in hot conditions, but water is a good way to hydrate as well.

Ventilate: Stay in a place where there is plenty of air circulating to keep your body cool. If you are indoors and don't have access to air conditioning, open windows and use a fan.

Cover Up: Wear light-colored and loose-fitting clothing to avoid absorbing the sun's light and trapping heat. Wear a hat to shield yourself from the sun, but once you feel yourself getting warm, remove any items covering your head which can trap heat close to your body.

Limit Activity: Heatstroke can occur in less than an hour when you are participating in strenuous activity during a hot day. If you feel yourself getting hot or light-headed, stop your activity and rest in a cool place out of the sun. Be sure to drink water or a sports drink before, during, and after any strenuous activity.

90 Days of Summer Safety

MedStar EMS encourages the community to enjoy their summer activities safely through 90 Days of Summer Safety. Each week from June 15 through September 7 a new summer-themed safety topic will be highlighted with tips and information. Topics include firework safety, drunk driving awareness, and tips for avoiding heat stroke. Check www.medstar911.org each week for the latest Summer Safety topic.

About MedStar

MedStar is the exclusive emergency and non-emergency ambulance service provider to 15 Tarrant County cities including Blue Mound, Burleson, Edgecliff Village, Forest Hill, Fort Worth, Haltom City, Haslet, Lakeside, Lake Worth, River Oaks, Saginaw, Sansom Park, Westover Hills, Westworth Village, and White Settlement. Established in 1986, MedStar provides advanced life support ambulance service to 421 square miles and more than 860,000 residents in Tarrant County. MedStar responds to about 100,000 emergency calls a year with a fleet of 47 ambulances.

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