



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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## For Immediate Release

### Elderly Population Is More Prone to Heat Stress

KENOSHA, WI – With summer approaching, people of all ages need to be aware of the dangers associated with extreme heat and humidity, especially the population aged 65 years and older. Every year, heat related deaths occur throughout Wisconsin. According to Wisconsin Emergency Management, summer heat waves have been the biggest weather-related killers in Wisconsin for the past 50 years, far exceeding tornadoes, severe storms, flash floods, and lightning combined. The majority of these deaths are seen in the elderly population. **Experts say the elderly population is more prone to heat related illness and death** for several reasons:

- Elderly people do not adjust as well as young people to sudden changes in temperature;
- They are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that upsets normal body responses to heat; and,
- They are more likely to take prescription medicines that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature or that inhibit perspiration.

Although the elderly population may be the most vulnerable to heat related illness and death, everyone should understand the symptoms of the most common heat-related illnesses, heat stroke and heat exhaustion, and take the necessary precautions. Pay particular attention if you take psychotropic medications for depression, attention deficit disorder, and mental illness.

**Heat stroke** is the most severe form of heat related illness. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided. If you notice any signs of heat stroke seek medical attention immediately while you begin cooling the affected person. Symptoms of heat stroke include:

- Extremely high body temperature (above 103°F) and rapid, strong pulse;
- Red-hot, dry skin; and,
- Throbbing headache, dizziness, confusion, and nausea.

**Heat exhaustion** is a milder form of heat-related illness. Heat exhaustion should be treated by cooling the body temperature with liquids and a cool shower. Seek medical attention if you notice an increased heart rate and blood pressure. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Heavy sweating, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, and nausea.

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Prevent heat related illness by taking the following precautions during the hot humid summer months:

- Stay inside with air-conditioning or a fan to circulate the air;
- **Do not** participate in strenuous outdoor activity;
- Drink plenty of cool, caffeine-free, non-alcoholic beverages; and,
- **Never** leave children, physically or mentally impaired individuals, or pets alone in your vehicle.

For more information, please contact the Kenosha County Division of Health at (262) 605-6700 or the Kenosha County Division of Emergency Management at (262) 605-7900.

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