



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

All Editor and Health Journalists

Media Statement Your Health During the Heat Wave

Pretoria, 08 October 2015. The heat wave has struck some parts of the country including Gauteng. Many homes do not have air conditioning facilities. Extreme heat can be very dangerous for one's health and surviving in the extreme temperatures can be very challenging.

Very high temperatures may result in heat related illnesses such as heat cramps, heat stroke with serious complications due to the rapid rise in body temperature. Some of these conditions may be life threatening.

Factors that may increase the risks include being obese, dehydration, heart diseases, and alcohol use which result in dehydration.

The following may greatly assist in reducing dangers of the heat wave conditions:

- Drink lots of water
- A sugar-salt solution or a sports drink may be taken to replace the salt and minerals lost from heavy sweating.
- Avoids liquids that contain alcohol, caffeine and high sugar content as these causes the body to lose more body fluid
- Avoid strenuous activity in sun especially during high temperature hours (mid morning to early afternoon).
- Slow down. Avoid strenuous activity during high temperature hours. Exercise during the cooler times of the day e.g. between 4.00 and 7.00 am;
- Wear light weight and light colored clothing, hats that provide shade from the sun. Use umbrellas and sunscreen.
- Keep children, the aged and sick persons indoors.
- Do not leave children and pets in a parked vehicle even with a window open.
- Ensure that pets have a cool place to relax and cool clean water to drink

Signs and symptoms of severe heat stroke or exhaustion include the following: Mild symptoms: heavy sweating; muscle cramps; tiredness; weakness; dizziness; headache; nausea or vomiting, fainting. Move to a cool area, rest, take a cool bath.

Heat cramps: muscle pains, or spasms in the abdomen, arms and legs. Get medical attention.

Heat stroke: Extremely high temperature, skin feeling too hot, rapid pulse, Headache, dizziness, nausea, and confusion – Get medical attention urgently.

For further information, please contact:

Head of Communication: National Department of Health

Popo Maja: 072 585 3219/082 373 1169