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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preventing Heat-Related Illness

With temperatures predicted to reach the 90s in parts of the area, the Putnam County Department of Health is urging residents to stay out of the heat. If you must be outdoors in sweltering conditions there are precautions you can take to avoid heat-related illness.

Anyone at any time, even those who are physically fit, can suffer heat-related illness. Some people, such as infants, young children and those over 65 years of age, are at even greater risk than others. Also, people with diabetes or chronic respiratory illnesses, such as asthma, may find that their conditions get worse during the summer months.

“Heat or sun stroke is the most dangerous type of heat-related illness and causes several hundred deaths in the United States each year. Heat stroke occurs when a person’s body temperature goes over 105 degrees Fahrenheit. If you think someone has heat stroke, call 911,” said Allen Beals, MD., Commissioner of Health.

“A person may not have heat or sun stroke, but can experience heat exhaustion and heat cramps. Heat exhaustion symptoms include cold, pale, clammy skin, fainting and vomiting. Move the person to an area out of the direct sunlight and put a washcloth or towel with cool water on the back of their neck or forehead. Give them water every 15 minutes for one hour,” he added.

Heat cramps are painful spasms in the legs and abdomen. To relieve heat cramps, apply pressure on the cramping muscles or gently massage them. As in the case of heat exhaustion, give the person sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour.

To ensure a safe summer, take these steps to stay cool in hot weather:

- Drink plenty of fluid. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Water is best because it replenishes your body's natural fluids. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy. Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Do not eat a lot of food high in protein, which increases your body heat.
- Engage in physical activity during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. Try not to go outside during the hottest part of the day - between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Stay indoors in a cool or air-conditioned place.
- Never leave a person or pet in a parked vehicle, even if you expect it to be a short period of time.

The Putnam County Department of Health also strongly encourages all residents to check on their elderly relatives and neighbors during heat waves. Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and watch them closely for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

For more information on heat-related illness, call the Putnam County Department of Health at (845) 808-1390.

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