



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Heat Wave Brings Health Problems

Brewster, NY- When the temperatures soar, health problems can arise. Staying cool and hydrated is the key to staying healthy and safe in a heat wave. Even those who are young and physically fit can suffer heat-related illness in extreme temperatures, especially when the hot weather lasts a few days. During hot weather, outdoor activities are best done in the early morning or evening hours when it is coolest.

“Residents should be careful during any hot weather. Watch out for your family and friends, and check in on your neighbors. Infants, young children and the elderly can have more problems in hot weather,” says MaryEllen Odell. “During extreme heat events, cooling centers are opened during the day for Putnam residents.”

“A list of Putnam cooling center locations is posted online, along with the phone numbers you can call to check their hours of operation,” says Ken Clair, Commissioner of Emergency Services. The list is available at the NYS Department of Health website at <https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/weather/cooling/>.

Heat stroke, sometimes also called sun stroke, is the most dangerous type of heat-related illness. “Heat stroke actually causes several thousand deaths each year in the United States,” says Michael Nesheiwat, M.D., Interim Commissioner of Health. “When a person’s body temperature goes over 103 degrees Fahrenheit, all sorts of very serious problems can occur, including damage to your brain, heart, kidneys and muscles. If you suspect someone has heat stroke, call 911 immediately. The longer treatment is delayed the higher the risk of serious complications or death. Before help arrives, move the person to a cooler location, out of the sun or into air conditioning, and lower the person’s temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath.”

In addition to a body temperature of 103 degrees or higher, symptoms of heat stroke include altered mental state or behavior, confusion, nausea, rapid breathing, racing heart or headache.

Heat exhaustion, although less severe than heat stroke, is another heat-related problem. Signs of this include cold, pale, clammy skin, dizziness, fainting, nausea, muscle cramps or headache. “If you experience these symptoms, move to a cooler location and apply cool water to lower your temperature. With heat exhaustion, drink sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour,” Dr. Nesheiwat advises.

Heat cramps or painful spasms in the legs and abdomen can also occur, but are less severe. If a person is on a low-sodium diet or has heart problems, seek medical attention right away. Otherwise, drink sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour. If cramps don’t go away within one hour, seek medical care.

Take the following precautions to avoid problems in hot weather. Drink plenty of fluids and don’t wait to be thirsty to drink. Water is best because it replenishes your body’s natural fluids. Alcohol and very sugary drinks should be avoided because they dehydrate the body.

Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. Apply it 30 minutes before going out because a sunburn will affect the body's ability to cool down. Stay indoors in a cool or air-conditioned place as much as possible. Never leave a person or pet in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are open or you think it may be only for a few minutes.

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

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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