

Health Unit Media Release

For Immediate Release: July 5, 2010



Health Unit Issues Heat Alert

In the summer, the combination of high heat and high humidity can be very dangerous. **Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, has issued a heat alert.** The Heat Alert is expected to last for a few days and will be in effect until further notification. The UV index is also expected to be very high for the next few days as well.

Health Unit Staff are monitoring the situation closely. The Heat Alert has been issued due to the combination of extreme heat, high humidity, and/or smog that can be hazardous to your health.

Conditions during a Heat Alert have the potential to cause dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and, in some cases, death. Everyone is at risk during a Heat Alert however the following are in greater danger of being affected.

The people at risk during these weather conditions include:

- elderly
- people with chronic illness or who take certain medications
- infants and preschool children
- people who participate in physical activity or are involved in strenuous outdoor work for prolonged periods

During a Heat Alert/Warning the public is strongly encouraged to check on a neighbour or a friend who may have a greater risk of suffering negative health consequences from the heat.

During very hot weather, everyone should take the following precautions:

- Drink lots of water and 100% fruit juices (avoid alcohol, and caffeine); or eat foods that have a high water content such as watermelon, grapes and oranges.
- Stay out of the hot sun or heat
- Whenever possible go to an air-conditioned room or building, including shopping malls and libraries
- If you don't have air-conditioning keep the blinds closed, the shades drawn and the lights off
- Avoid strenuous outdoor physical activity, reschedule sport practices
- Wear a hat, sunscreen, and light loose-fitting clothing
- Avoid heavy meals and using your oven
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about your medication and the heat
- Never leave a child or a pet unattended in a car
- Use a fan in or by a window but be aware fans may not be useful in conditions of extreme heat
- Take a cool bath or shower or visit a local pool or beach

Even short periods of exposure to high temperatures and smog can cause health problems. If you experience the following symptoms after exposure to extreme heat seek medical attention immediately:

- Nausea, dizziness, blurred vision
- Difficulty or rapid breathing
- Severe headache or confusion
- Convulsion
- Fever

For more information on how to protect your health during extreme heat visit the health unit website: www.healthunit.org.

For specific health heat-related questions call the Health Action Line at: 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685.

Contact: Joan Mays, Manager of Health Protection at 613-345-5685