Health Unit
Media Release

June 24, 2013

Health Unit issues Heat Alert

Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, has issued a Heat Alert because of the high heat and humidity that is forecast for this week. Temperatures and humidex levels are expected to be extreme throughout the week. A combination of heat and high humidity can be hazardous to your health. Conditions during high heat and humidity have the potential to cause dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and in some cases death.

Everyone is at risk; however the following are in greater danger of being affected:

- 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, 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 and humidity.

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

- Do not leave children, adults or pets in parked cars or sleeping outside in direct sunlight.
- Consult your doctor or pharmacist regarding the side effects of your medications.
- Drink plenty of water and 100% fruit juices throughout the day, even if you don't feel very thirsty. Remember to take sips often and not to guzzle your drink.
- Eat foods that have high water content such as watermelon, grapes and oranges.
- Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages, coffee and cola.
- Avoid going out in the blazing sun or heat when possible. If you must go outside, stay in the shade as much as possible. Plan any necessary outdoor activities in early morning or evening.
- Whenever possible go to an air-conditioned room or building, including shopping malls and libraries
- Wear loose fitting, light clothing and a wide-brimmed hat when outdoors.
- Keep window shades or drapes drawn and blinds closed on the sunny side of your home.
- Keep electric lights off or turned down low.
- Take a cool bath or shower periodically or cool down with cool, wet towels.
- Visit a local pool or beach – check for postings http://www.healthunit.org/water/test/beach_results.htm
- Avoid eating heavy meals and using your oven.
- Use fans to draw cool air at night, but do not rely on a fan as a main cooling device during long periods of high heat and humidity.
- Reduce the use of personal vehicles, stop unnecessary idling; avoid using oil-based paints and glues, pesticides and gas-powered small engines.

Even short periods of exposure to high temperatures 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 at www.healthunit.org. For specific health heat-related questions call the Health Action Line at: 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LGLHealthUnit.

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