

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients About Heat Stroke

As the days grow longer and the heat index continues to rise, heat-related illnesses are a real risk for those working or spending extended amounts of time outdoors. Resulting from prolonged exposure to high temperatures, heat illness progresses from cramping and fainting to heat exhaustion and stroke.

What is heat stroke? Heat stroke is a life-threatening condition associated with high temperatures and humidity leading to loss of the body's temperature control that causes the body's core temperature to rise, eventually leading to exhaustion or unconsciousness.

Who is at risk? Individuals at risk include older men or women who live in apartments or homes lacking air conditioning or having poor air flow, and any individual who doesn't drink enough water, has a chronic illness, or who drinks excessive amounts of alcohol. Children are also susceptible to heat stroke because they produce more heat when exercising, and have less sweating capacity than adults.

1. ***What are the signs and symptoms of heat stroke?*** Common symptoms of heat stroke include nausea and vomiting, seizures, confusion, disorientation, and sometimes loss of consciousness or coma. Other symptoms that may indicate the person is suffering from heat stroke include throbbing headache; dizziness; light-headedness; lack of sweating despite the heat; red, hot, and dry skin; muscle weakness or cramps; rapid heartbeat; and rapid, shallow breathing.

2. ***What should I do if I suspect someone is suffering from heat stroke?*** If you suspect someone is suffering from heat stroke, immediately call 911 or transport the person to the hospital. If waiting for paramedics, initiate first aid and use these remedies to cool the person:

- Remove the person from the heat, and move him or her to an air-conditioned environment, or shady area if no air conditioning is available.
- Remove any unnecessary clothing.
- Apply ice packs to the patient's head, neck, groin, arms, and legs
- Use a cooling blanket or cool water bath.

It is vital to get the person cooled down and treated as quickly as possible to reduce the risk of damage to vital organs or death.

If you must be outdoors, you can take these preventative steps:

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, and a wide brimmed hat.
- Use sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or more.
- Drink plenty water to prevent dehydration. It's generally recommended to drink at least eight glasses of water daily. It may also be beneficial to substitute an electrolyte-rich sports drink for water during periods of extreme heat and humidity.
- Spend time outdoors during the cooler parts of the day, either early morning or after sunset.

It's important to be aware of the preventative measures, signs, symptoms, and treatment of heat stroke to keep yourself and your family safe and cool during hot Louisiana summers! If you have any questions about sunscreen or electrolyte supplementation for long days in the heat, consult your local pharmacist.

Resources:

"Heat Stroke: Symptoms and Treatment." *WebMD*. Web. 22 June 2016.

"Heatstroke Complications." *Mayo Clinic*. N.p., 12 July 2014. Web. 22 June 2016.

S.E. Huether, Rodway, and DeFriez. "Chapter 16: Pain, Temperature Regulation, Sleep, and Sensory Function." *Pathophysiology: The Biologic Basis for Disease in Adults and Children*. 7th ed. St. Louis, Missouri: Mosby, 2014. 548. Print.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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