



**Date:** June 27, 2008

**General questions:** Patrick O'Neill, 971-673-1282

**Technical questions:** Emilio DeBess, 971-673-1027

## **Health officials advise Oregonians to avoid heat-related illness**

---

With record-breaking temperatures predicted for the next few days, Oregon health officials are reminding residents to take precautions against getting sick from extreme heat.

Except for a short hot spell in mid-May this is expected to be the first episode of really hot weather this year. Forecasters predict an abrupt change to higher temperatures after an unseasonably cool spring.

The elderly, the very young and people with chronic diseases are most at risk from heat-related illness. But even healthy young people need to stay cool and cut down on strenuous activity when temperatures spike, according to Mel Kohn, M.D., state epidemiologist in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.

"Prevention is the best defense," Kohn said. "Drink lots of water or juice--even when you're not thirsty. Wear loose fitting, light-colored clothing and stay out of the sun during the hottest time of day."

Because older people are among those particularly at risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion or heat stroke, Kohn encourages checking regularly on elderly neighbors to make sure they stay cool and drink plenty of water.

Kohn said children and pets should never be left in a parked car.

"Extreme heat can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and both are dangerous," Kohn said. "Also, people with pre-existing health conditions, such as heart disease or high blood pressure, are at increased risk because higher temperatures put added stress on their bodies."

Kohn advises people to be aware of the warning signs of heat-related illness so they can summon help immediately if they observe them. In the case of heat exhaustion, symptoms include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, weakness, headache and vomiting.

Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness and can be a life-threatening, Kohn said. Warning signs include an extremely high body temperature, dry skin, rapid pulse, headache, nausea, vomiting and confusion.

Additional information on how to avoid heat-related illness is on the Web at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.asp> and at <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/heat.html>