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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## STAY SAFE IN HOT WEATHER

### Learn How to Stay Cool When the Weather is Hot

YPSILANTI, Mich., July 6, 2010—In case you haven't noticed, it's hot out there. *Really* hot. And while you may have thought summer arrived sometime during early May, with temperatures routinely reaching the upper 80s and low 90s, summer is now officially here. Which means it's going to get even *hotter*. Even more reason to brush up on hot weather safety tips, according to officials at the Washtenaw County Public Health Department.

“Those most at risk for heat-related illnesses include people ages 65 and older, infants and young children, people who are overweight, people who are ill, have chronic diseases, or on certain medications, and people who are doing strenuous physical activities,” said Cindra James, Public Health Preparedness Coordinator for the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. “The easiest things to do to avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke are some of the simplest. Stay hydrated by drinking lots of non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated beverages, go somewhere with air conditioning, or take a cool shower or bath,” she said. “And don't forget to check-in with family, friends, and neighbors to monitor their well-being. If you recognize the symptoms of heat exhaustion or heat stroke, seek medical attention immediately.”

People suffer heat-related illnesses when their bodies cannot cool themselves normally. If you are exercising or playing sports when it's hot outside, you need to be extra careful. And don't forget your animals who also need special care and attention during times of extreme heat. Here's how to beat the heat and stay safe:

#### Beat the Heat Tips:

- **Keep cool** - Spend as much time as you can in cooler surroundings, such as an air-conditioned shopping mall, senior center, public library or movie.
- **Use an air-conditioner or fan** - Air conditioning can provide life saving relief from heat stress, especially if you have a medical condition like heart disease. Use a fan only when the windows are open or the air conditioner is on. Fans will not prevent heat-illness when the temperature is in the high 90's

- **Baths and showers** - Cool baths or showers provide amazing relief from the heat 25 times faster than cool air.
- **Clothing** - Wear as little as possible when you are home. Lightweight, light colored, loose fitting clothing is more comfortable in hot weather. Cotton and other natural fabrics are very comfortable. Wear a hat or use a parasol or umbrella to protect your head and neck when you are outdoors.
- **Drink often** - In hot weather, your body needs more water. Don't wait until you are thirsty, because your body needs more fluid than thirst will indicate. By the time you feel thirsty, you may already be dangerously low on water.

Drink often and in reasonable amounts. Don't drink a lot of coffee or tea. They are all right in moderation, but water is your best bet.

If you have a disease, a chronic medical condition or a problem with body water balance, check with your doctor for advice on how much water you should drink in hot weather.

- **Slow down** - Take it easy, especially at the start of hot weather when your body is less prepared for the heat. Physical activity produces body heat.
- **Watch what you eat and monitor salt intake** - Avoid hot foods and heavy meals. They add heat to your body. Try using your stove less. Cook your meals during the cooler part of the day.

Check with your doctor before you increase the amount of salt or potassium in your diet. Do not take "salt tablets" without your doctor's permission.

- **Avoid alcohol** - Alcohol interferes with your body's fight against heat stress. It can put a strain on your heart.
- **Apply sunscreen to your skin before going out in the sun.** Avoid sun exposure particularly between the hours of 10:00 am and 4:00 pm, typically the hottest hours of the day.

Some medications make it harder for the body to control its temperature, putting people taking these medications at higher risk for heat-related illnesses. Medications that may increase the risk of heat-related illness include:

- Antidepressant drugs
- Anti-Parkinson drugs
- Psychiatric drugs
- Some antihistamines (e.g., Benadryl and Chlortripolon)
- Over-the-counter sleeping medications (e.g., Nytol)
- Anti-diarrhea pills (e.g., Lomotil)

For more information about issues that affect the public's health, or the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, please visit <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org> or call (734) 544-6700.

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