

PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT



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Health department educates about staying safe in the heat

Heat-related illness is when a body is unable to properly cool down. Normally the cool down process is done through sweating. When temperatures are at extreme highs, sweating isn't enough.

Who's at risk for heat related injury?

Elderly people (65 years and older), infants and young children, and people who have chronic disease or mental illness are at highest risk for heat related injury.

What to do?

Rose Ferraro, Director of Nursing at the Portage County Health Department, suggests staying inside with air conditioning if possible. If you are going to spend time outdoors, try to limit your activities to morning and evening hours. Stay in the shade whenever possible and make sure to drink plenty of fluids. "It is best to drink water or sports beverages and avoid sugary drinks and alcohol during times when in the heat," states Rose Ferraro.

"People can reduce their risk for heat-related illness by staying inside with air conditioning. If your home is not air conditioned, many places in the community provide air conditioning such as public libraries or shopping centers," says Rose Ferraro. The Senior Center at 705 Oakwood Street in Ravenna is offering seniors a place to cool down from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm everyday Monday - Friday. Contact Dee Lynn at 330-297-3456 for questions about the Senior Center.

What is heat stroke?

Heat Stroke is when the body is unable to regulate its temperature. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if treatment is not provided.

Warning signs: high body temperature (above 103°F, orally), hot skin with no sweating, rapid pulse, throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and unconsciousness.

What to do: call for medical assistance, get the person to a shady area, and cool the person down with cool water (spray with hose, cool shower, or sponge with cool water). The CDC warns to not give the person fluids to drink.

In an emergency situation involving extreme heat, in conjunction with a local jurisdiction, the Portage County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) would open cooling centers within the county. Cooling centers are places within the county that would offer the community relief from the heat by providing a facility that is air-conditioned. Contact John Barber, EMA Director for more information at 330-297-3607.

More information on extreme heat can be found at http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp.

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