



Custer County Health Department  
Creating a State of Health

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sent to:** KYCU Radio 89.1, The Cordell Beacon, The Sentinel Leader, The Thomas Tribune, Weatherford Daily News, West Ok Weekly, Clinton Daily News.

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### **Health Officials Urge Caution to Prevent Heat-Related Illnesses**

Summer is here and temperatures are rising. Each year, more than 600 people die from heat-related illness in the United States. In Oklahoma, there were 145 deaths associated with exposure to excessive heat from 2010 to 2017. Approximately 70% of those deaths occurred in males.

The Custer County Health Department reminds residents that heat-related illness can range from heat rash, heat cramps, and heat exhaustion to hyperthermia (overheating) and heat stroke. Heat stroke occurs when the body is unable to cool itself sufficiently, and it often results in severe organ damage or even death.

Heat-related deaths and illnesses are preventable. It is important to recognize the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke and act quickly.

#### **Heat Exhaustion**

- Heavy sweating
- Weakness
- Cold, pale, clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Muscle cramps
- Headache
- Feeling dizzy

#### **Heat Stroke**

- Body temperature of 103 degrees or higher
- Hot, red, dry or moist skin
- Rapid and strong pulse
- Headache
- Nausea



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- Feeling confused
- Feeling dizzy
- Unconsciousness

A heat stroke is a medical emergency. If any signs are observed, call 911 immediately and move the person to a cooler environment. Reduce the person's body temperature with cool cloths or a bath.

The Custer County Health Department offers the following safety tips for preventing a heat-related illness:

**Stay indoors.** Stay in an air-conditioned place. If a home is not air-conditioned, visit a mall or public library, or contact a local health department for the location of a heat-relief shelter in the area.

**Stay hydrated.** Increase fluid intake to two to four glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids every hour. Anyone taking water pills or is on restricted fluids should consult a physician first. Avoid liquids which contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar; they contribute to the loss of more body fluid. Very cold drinks can cause stomach cramps and should be avoided as well.

**Dress appropriately.** Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing as well as sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher and broad spectrum or UVA/UVB protection.

**Schedule outdoor activities carefully.** Try to limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours. When outside, rest often in shady areas to allow the body a chance to recover.

**Pace yourself.** Cut down on exercise during the heat. Someone who is not accustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment should start slowly and increase pace gradually. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, stop all activity. Get into a cool area or into the shade, and rest, especially when becoming lightheaded, confused, weak or faint.

**Closely monitor those who are more vulnerable.** Infants, children, people older than 65 years of age, those with mental illness, outdoor workers, athletes, and those with physical illnesses such as heart disease or high blood pressure should be closely observed.

**Never leave pets or people in a vehicle.** Never leave anyone, especially children, the elderly or pets in a parked vehicle, even if the windows are cracked.

For more information on summer heat safety, contact the Custer County Health Department at (580) 323-2100 or visit <http://ips.health.ok.gov>