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HEALTH OFFICIALS CAUTION ABOUT DEHYDRATION AND HEAT EXHAUSTION

TALLAHASSEE- - It is summertime in Florida, and as volunteers assist with pre-oil impact beach debris cleanup activities and response workers help with cleanup efforts along the Gulf Coast, health officials ask everyone to be aware of the warning signs of heat exhaustion and dehydration.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat-related illness that can develop after exposure to high temperatures and inadequate or unbalanced replacement of fluids. Those most prone to heat exhaustion are the elderly, people with high blood pressure and people working or exercising in a hot environment.

WARNING SIGNS MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Heavy sweating
- Paleness
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Skin: may be cool and moist
- Pulse rate: fast and weak
- Breathing: fast and shallow

If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to the more serious heat-related illness, called heat stroke, or even death. Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following occurs:

- Symptoms are severe.
- The victim has heart problems or high blood pressure.

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- Otherwise, help the victim to cool off and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

WHAT TO DO IF HEAT EXHAUSTION IS SUSPECTED:

Cooling measures that may be effective include the following:

- Drinking cool, nonalcoholic beverages, as directed by your physician
- Resting in an air-conditioned environment
- Taking a cool shower, bath or sponge bath
- Wearing lightweight clothing
- Preventing sun burn, which damages the skin's ability to dissipate heat by wearing sunscreen of 30 SPF.

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration can be avoided by drinking plenty of fluids, especially water, even if you don't feel thirsty. This is particularly true on days when temperatures reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit (F) and higher. Depending upon your physical activity and heat exposure during hot weather, it's a good idea to drink more water. Health experts have found that fluid requirements vary from person to person. Persons who have medical conditions such as kidney and heart disease, who require a fluid restricted diet, or who have problems with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids.

Babies from birth – 6 months: healthy infants normally do not need extra water (beyond what is already contained in formula or breast milk). On a hot day, a small amount of water may be needed, but check with your physician on how much to give.

Babies from 6-12 months: breast or formula-fed babies that are receiving solid foods should also be receiving water.

Children 12 months and older: should be reminded to drink fluids, preferably water throughout the day. Encourage them to drink more on hot days.

Adults should drink: When exposed to temperatures reaching 90 F and higher, depending on physical activity level and heat exposure, adults should drink even more water.

Knowing the signs of dehydration and knowing what to do is very important.

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION INCLUDE:

- Thirst
- Weakness
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps
- Feeling dizzy, light headed

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- Decreased urine levels and/or urine that has a strong odor or is darker than normal
- Tiredness, sluggishness
- Irritability
- Headaches

All, some or none of these signs may be present, so monitor water or fluid intake and modify activity or reduce the length of activity according to weather conditions.

Don't wait for dry mouth, flushed skin, headaches, lightheadedness or fatigue to occur. Prevent dehydration by drinking fluids throughout the day. Help to avoid becoming dehydrated by staying out of the direct sun, wearing light colored loose fitting clothing, limiting physical activity, and using fans when available.

If you suspect you are becoming dehydrated, get to a cool or shady area and sip cool water or fluids. If your condition does not improve, seek medical attention immediately,

For further information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us/ or www.Floridadisaster.org.

For more state and federal information on response worker safety, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/health.htm.

For more information on Florida's response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, visit www.deepwaterhorizonflorida.com, follow [www.Twitter.com/FLDEPalert](https://twitter.com/FLDEPalert) or call the Florida Oil Spill Information Line at 1-888-337-3569.

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