



MEDIA RELEASE

21 December 2004

Keep cool and stay safe during the summer sizzle

With the summer season upon us, South Western Sydney Area Health Service is urging people to follow some simple precautions to keep cool and stay safe.

As temperatures begin to sizzle, Liverpool Hospital director of emergency Dr Richard Cracknell advises people of all ages to take care and avoid heat exhaustion by protecting themselves against the sun and heat.

“People need to be alert for the symptoms associated with heat exhaustion in themselves or others, especially young children and the elderly,” Dr Cracknell said.

“Symptoms of heat exhaustion include nausea, faintness, dizziness, loss of appetite, weakness, headache, and vomiting.

“If any of these symptoms occur, lay the person down and apply cool, wet towels around the neck and under the arms, and have them drink cool fluids.

“If the person does not respond to treatment or has severe symptoms such as confusion or collapse, call 000 immediately and ask for the Ambulance Service.

“People with existing diseases or sicknesses such as heart problems, diabetes or hypertension should take extra caution in the heat.”

Dr Cracknell said other people who may be at risk of heat exhaustion include outdoor workers, people in workplaces with inadequate cooling systems and workers involved in strenuous physical activities.

Dr Cracknell has outlined the following heat safety tips:

- Consume plenty of water, preferably every 15-20 minutes, to stay well hydrated.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, sugary or caffeine drinks that can increase dehydration.
- Feed breastfed infants more frequently to help keep up their fluids.
- Keeping as cool as possible by wearing light, loose, comfortable clothing.

- Keeping out of the sun in the hottest part of the day (between 11am and 3pm). Stay preferably in an air-conditioned environment – shopping centres and libraries are a good refuge.
- Avoid outdoor exercise or strenuous physical activity, especially in the middle of the day.
- Avoid hot winds.
- Take advantage of the shade when outside; it is a great defence against the sun.
- Don't forget to cover up when in the sun, wear a shirt, sunscreen and hat.
- Replenish salt lost from sweating by eating proper, regular meals.

“Keep in mind that heat generated in a closed car can be fatal to children,” Dr Cracknell said.

“Never leave children or animals in the car unattended as they can heat up to fatal temperatures, even with the window slightly open.

“If you are expecting to take a long trip by car, do pack plenty of healthy snacks and water to drink during the journey. This will help sustain children and adults energy levels.

“Keep a special eye on infants as less frequent wet nappies, irritability or sleepiness can be signs of dehydration in babies. If you are concerned that your baby is experiencing these symptoms please seek medical attention early,” he said.

Issued by South Western Sydney Area Health Service Public Affairs (02) 9828 6848