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June 18, 2010

PRESS RELEASE

Paramus Health Officer Suggests Ways to Beat the Heat

When both the outdoor temperature and humidity are high anyone can find the weather stifling. However, older people suffering from diabetes or heart disease and those suffering from mild dementia may be at special risk. Their medications may leave them increasingly vulnerable to heat exhaustion. Diuretics, used to treat heart conditions, can affect fluid balance so users may find themselves susceptible to dehydration when the mercury rises. Some drugs used to treat Parkinson's Disease may impair the ability to perspire, an important method the body uses to counteract the heat. Without steps to correct it, heat exhaustion can quickly proceed to heat stroke accompanied by confusion, dizziness, seizures and finally coma. The early signs – weakness, flushed skin, headache and profuse sweating are all signs calling for quick action.

Paramus Health Officer John Hopper has several suggestions for staying cool in the heat. Wear loose clothing that allows for perspiration without trapping heat. Tank tops and shorts may look good for summer wear, but expose more skin to the sun. Wear a hat when outdoors. If you don't have an air conditioner use a spray bottle to mist water on your arms while you sit near a fan – the evaporation that results will take body heat with it. This becomes less effective when the temperature is over 100 or the humidity is high. Tuck ice packs into your armpits or onto your wrists. You'll need to take in enough non-alcoholic fluids to replace what's lost through perspiration, but be sure that it's electrolyte balanced, like Gatorade or Pedialyte.

Gulping large amounts of plain water may cause more harm and result in muscle cramps or diarrhea and vomiting. Reduce physical activity or reschedule it for cooler times of the day.

Never leave children, frail elderly or pets in a parked car. Temperatures can quickly climb to dangerous levels with disastrous results.

Additional helpful suggestions come from Paramus Board of Health members who say “Go to the mall, the grocery store, the movies or anywhere else where it’s cool.” If you have older neighbors be sure to check on them and make sure that they’re able to beat the heat. Remember, heat exhaustion can quickly be a health emergency. In 2006, a summer heat wave in Chicago caused the death of 700 people. Decide now how you’re going to handle those hot summer days; you’ll be glad you did.

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