To: Campus Community  
From: Dr. Deborah Stewart, Student Health Center

With the rising temperatures, it is important to keep health and safety in mind when enjoying the summer. With the soaring numbers we are experiencing, it is important to know the signs of heat injuries and vital prevention tips.

Sun burns are the most common form of heat injury. Sun burns result from over exposure from the sun and should be protected against by using sunscreen, and being sure to re-apply. Sun burns can also be avoided by wearing protective clothing and avoiding prolonged sun exposure.

Another common but more serious form of heat injury is heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion is brought on by heavy sweating and eventually, decreased precipitation and increased body temperature.

Causes of heat exhaustion and prevention include:

- High temperatures: Air temperature, combined with humidity, and sun will affect sweat evaporation, and how well we are able to cool ourselves. It is important to avoid prolonged exposure to extreme heat or sun without proper hydration and UV protection.
- Dehydration: Not having enough fluids will affect your body’s ability to maintain a stable core temperature. Be sure to increase fluid uptake with increased exercise or temperature!
- Clothing: Heavy, dark clothing will absorb heat and make sweat evaporation more difficult. Be sure to dress accordingly.

It is important to note the symptoms of heat exhaustion so that it may be prevented:

- Increased sweating
- Excessive thirst
- Weakness, fatigue, and sometimes unconsciousness

If you suspect that you or someone you know may be experiencing heat exhaustion:

- Move the person to a cool area, out of direct sunlight
- Give fluids
- Apply active cooling measures: air fanning, ice packs, wet towels, etc.
- Refer to a medical professional to assess fluid replacement and further medical attention, especially if nausea and vomiting occur.
The most serious form of heat injury is heat stroke, and is considered a medical emergency. This is when the core temperature of the body can no longer be controlled by our internal thermostat. Heat stroke results from prolonged exposure to high temperatures, usually in combination with dehydration. It also often occurs as a progression from a milder heat injury, such as heat exhaustion.

Symptoms include:

- Throbbing headache
- Dizziness and light-headedness
- Lack of sweating, despite high temperatures
- Red, hot, dry skin
- Muscle weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion, disorientation, or unconsciousness

If you suspect that you or someone you know may be experiencing a heat stroke, seek immediate medical attention. While waiting on transportation, initiate first aid and try to cool down the patient. You can try to lower the patient’s core body temperature by:

- Applying ice packs to the armpit, groin, neck, and back. These areas are rich with blood vessels close to the skin, which when cooled may reduce body temperature
- Fan air on the patient while applying a wet compress to their skin
- Use an ice bath to help cool the body

An important take away from this is that heat injuries are preventable by following proper prevention techniques:

- Stay hydrated! It is recommended that you drink an average of eight cups of water per day. With increased activity and temperatures, it is recommended that you replenish the water you are losing through perspiration with an additional intake of fluids.
- Sun block: be sure to apply sun block to areas of skin that will be exposed to the sun. Also be sure to reapply sun block every few hours.
- Allow for frequent periods of rest as you need it. Don’t over exert yourself in the heat.
- Routinely monitor changing weather conditions, watching for extreme heat or humidity.