

## **Summer 2004**

### **Tip-of-the-month**

#### **Topic: Tips for being active during the summer months**

Summer is finally here and with it come some barriers that may prevent people from getting outdoors and being active. Here are some suggestions on what information you can provide to your clients so people can beat the heat and be active.

#### **What to wear – clothes and sunscreen**

Whether you are an active participant or are watching from the sidelines, it is important to dress for the heat.

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting shorts and shirts made of breathable fabrics.
- Consider wearing a shirt with long sleeves to protect your arms from prolonged sun exposure.
- Select athletic shoes that are comfortable, lightweight and free of abrasive inside seams.
- Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher to all exposed areas of your body and reapply as directed.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect not only your head, but your ears, neck and shoulders, as well.
- Try not to be outside during the peak sun times between 10am to 3pm.

#### **Water**

- Drink at least 8 cups of water a day.
- You should drink before, during and after physical activity.
- If you are thirsty it is an indicator that you are already dehydrated.
- Some sport drinks can help replenish the fluids, electrolytes, and minerals that you lose through your sweat during activity.

#### **Heat/Humidity**

- If you are new to being active, it is a good idea to consult with your doctor to see which activities would be appropriate for you.
- When the temperature rises, try to get your physical activity in before it gets too hot. Try to schedule your activities early in the morning or later in the evening-when things have cooled off.
- Don't forget to take regular breaks. Allow for about ten minutes of rest for every hour of activity. If there are children, older people, or less physically fit people participating in an activity, remember that they will require even more rest periods.
- You may need to acclimatize your body to the heat changes, so take it easy at first.

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- Listen to your body. If it tells you to slow down – slow down.
- In some cases you may develop some heat related illnesses such as: heat stroke, heat exhaustion or muscle cramps. Knowing the symptoms will help you determine how you can avoid them.

### **Heat Cramps**

Heat cramps usually occur when a person sweats a lot during strenuous activity. When this happens, the body is depleted of salt and moisture and muscles may contract, causing painful cramps.

Look for:

- Cramps or spasms occur in the abdomen, arms or legs.
- Cease all activity and sit in a cool place.
- Drink clear juice, a sports beverage, water.
- Avoid returning to strenuous activity for a few hours after the cramps subside.
- If the cramps do not go away after an hour, seek medical attention.

### **Heat Exhaustion**

Heat exhaustion is a form of heat-related illness that typically develops after several days of exposure to high temperatures and insufficient replenishment of fluids. The elderly, people with high blood pressure, and people who work in hot environments, such as construction workers, are most likely to suffer from heat exhaustion.

Look for:

- Heavy sweating, pale skin, muscle cramping, weakness, dizziness and headache, nausea or vomiting, fainting.
- Drink cool, nonalcoholic beverages, rest, take a cool shower or bath, get into an air-conditioned environment, and change into dry, lightweight clothing.
- If symptoms worsen or do not subside within an hour, seek medical attention.

### **Heat stroke**

Heat stroke occurs when the body can no longer regulate its temperature. The body's temperature will rise rapidly, sweating will stop and the body will no longer be able to cool down. Heat stroke can cause death or permanent impairment if immediate treatment is not provided.

Look for:

- Hot, dry skin that is red in colour
- A throbbing headache
- Very high body temperature
- A rapid strong pulse
- Dizziness and headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting

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If you or someone you know is displaying these symptoms, it is important to seek medical assistance immediately. If possible, have another person call for help while you begin cooling the victim down. While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive, do the following:

- Move the victim to a cool, shady area
- Monitor the body temperature until it drops.
- Give the victim cool liquids to drink
- Cool the victim rapidly using whatever method is available. Spray them with a hose, place them in a tub filled with cool water, or wrap them in a cool wet sheet and fan them vigorously.

(Source: The Centre for Disease Control)

### **Extreme storms**

When a thunder and lightning storm strikes it is important to take cover. One of the worst things you could do is to seek shelter under a tree. If you find yourself out on a golf course or out swimming and a storm approaches, try to get yourself inside as soon as possible. The best place to be during an electrical storm is inside an enclosed building, or if you get caught outside try to stay low to the ground.

### **Smog Alerts**

It is a good idea to check the weather before heading outside. Often performing physical activities may actually have a reverse effect by doing damage to your lungs if you are overexerting yourself when there is a smog alert. Check [www.weather.ca](http://www.weather.ca) for the smog report.

### **Insects**

Those pesky little insects called mosquitoes can certainly be bothersome when you are out enjoying a nice walk. Avoid exercise during peak mosquito times early in the morning and in the early evening. Also avoid exercising near places that attract mosquitoes such as stagnant water. Applying DEET will not only deter the bugs from biting but it will also protect you from West Nile Virus.

Visit [www.healthyontario.com](http://www.healthyontario.com) to find out more about West Nile Virus.

### **Physical activity alternatives**

Don't let the weather, smog, and insects deter you from enjoying physical activity. If you find the elements too difficult - why not take your favorite activities indoors to a swimming pool or to a gym to do your walking on a treadmill.

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