As More Residents Return Home, Health Officials Emphasize Heat Stroke Risk

State of Louisiana News Desk #:

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Baton Rouge -- More Louisiana residents are now returning to their homes to focus on recovery and rebuilding after Hurricane Isaac. But, the rain has stopped, temperatures are rising and many homes are still without electrical power and air conditioning, so health officials remind the public to be aware of heat stroke and take precautions.

We know everyone's minds are on recovery, but we need everyone to take their risk of heat stroke seriously, said Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce D. Greenstein. This is a serious condition that can kill you. So, don't take chances with your health. Drink plenty of fluids, wear light, loose-fitting clothing and sunscreen, and take breaks in the shade or a cool area frequently.

When temperatures get high and weather is humid, people are at an increased risk of becoming ill or dying from heat exposure. Children and the elderly are most vulnerable, but everyone should be aware of the risk.

People's bodies normally cool by sweating but, under intense heat conditions, sweating isn't enough, and people's bodies become unable to cool down. In such cases, temperatures rise rapidly, which can lead to heat stroke, a potentially life-threatening condition. It's critical to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stroke, such as dizziness, confusion, headache, nausea or vomiting, rapid breathing, rapid pulse or changes in mental status.

Health officials advise the following tips for avoiding heat stroke:

1. Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid alcoholic or caffeinated beverages.
2. Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that helps keep you cool.
3. Limit physical activity; if you must exercise, do it in the morning or evening when the temperature is lower.
4. Avoid direct sunlight and extreme heat.
5. Use air conditioning, fans, or cool water to keep your home cool.
6. Stay indoors during the hottest parts of the day, especially for elderly or children.
7. Check on neighbors or relatives who may be vulnerable to heat stroke.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment. If someone exhibits symptoms of heat stroke, call 911 immediately. Treatment begins with cooling down the body as quickly as possible, and may include oral fluid replacement, anti-convulsant drugs, and sedation to prevent seizures.

Health officials encourage residents to remain vigilant about heat-related dangers, especially as temperatures are expected to remain high for the next few weeks. They remind everyone to stay informed about weather conditions and take necessary precautions to protect themselves and their families.

For more information, visit the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals website at https://www.doh.la.gov or call 225.358.5361.