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## Helpful tips for beating the heat this summer

By Vera Kochan

Now that the United States is deep in the throws of another potentially scorching summer, it goes without saying that folks are looking for ways to keep cool both inside and out. Even our elected officials are making sure to get the word out when it comes to summer heat safety.

In her latest e-newsletter, Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan issued an "Important Reminders before the Summer Heat Waves" bulletin for her constituents. It included recommendations for staying in air conditioned indoor locations as much as possible; staying hydrated by drinking lots of fluids; wearing sunscreen while outdoors; using battery-powered fans in the event of a power outage; scheduling any outdoor activities during cooler hours of the day; wearing loose/lightweight clothing; keeping curtains closed during the day to keep the sun out of the house; and making certain not to leave kids or pets in the car. Also noted was that all Contra Costa County libraries function as cooling centers in the event of a power outage. (Please note that the Moraga Library will be closed due to remodeling between July 29 - Oct. 10.) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention wants the public to know the warning signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses. Signs of a heat stroke include: high body temperature of 103 degrees or higher; hot, red, dry or damp skin; a fast, strong pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; and losing consciousness. Quickly call 911 as it is considered a medical emergency; move the person to a cooler location; lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath; and do not give the person anything to drink.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include: heavy sweating; cold, pale and clammy skin; a fast, weak pulse; nausea or vomiting; muscle cramps; tiredness or weakness; dizziness; headache; and fainting. If you experience heat exhaustion, the CDC recommends moving to a cool place, loosening your clothes, putting cool, wet cloths on your body or taking a cool bath, and sipping water. If you are vomiting, your symptoms get worse, or they last longer than one hour, get medical attention immediately.

Another heat-related illness is heat cramps. This involves heavy sweating during intense exercise combined with muscle pain or spasms. The CDC advises you to stop physical activity and move to a cool place, drink water or a sports drink, and wait for the cramps to go away before doing any more physical activity. Get medical help right away if your cramps last longer than one hour, if you're on a low-sodium diet, or if you have heart problems.

Sunburns can cause painful, red and warm skin. Extreme cases will produce blisters. CDC recommends staying out of the sun until the sunburn heals, putting cool cloths on the sunburned areas or taking a cool bath, putting moisturizing lotion on the affected areas, and avoid breaking the blisters.

Some people are prone to getting a heat rash which can look like red clusters of small blisters that look like pimples on the skin. This usually occurs on the neck, chest, groin or in elbow creases. Tips from the CDC include staying in a cool, dry place, keeping the rash dry, and using powder (like baby powder) to soothe the rash.

A big part of staying cool during a hot summer involves keeping the environment you live or work in cool. Pacific Gas & Electric Co. offers tips for beating the heat that are also cost-effective from Popular Science author Dan Seitz. While air conditioning is the go-to choice for cooling a room/house/office down, it's not good for the environment or the wallet.

Seitz notes that electric fans don't actually cool the air, they keep it moving, and this helps to clear the body's evaporated perspiration. If you have ceiling fans, make sure that they operate counterclockwise in order to pull colder air upward.

One of the biggest sources of unnecessary heat in the home comes from the kitchen. If possible, plan to serve meals that don't require using the oven. Seitz recommends using crock pots, microwave ovens or even serving a cool salad. Dishwashers also add heat to the kitchen. Either wash dishes by hand or turn the dishwasher on just before going to bed.

If all else fails, keep in mind that winter is only five months away.

Reach the reporter at: [vera@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:vera@lamorindaweekly.com)

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