

Heat-related illness on the rise; hospital gives tips on keeping cool

From Staff Reports

SHERIDAN – With an influx in heat-related illness patients at Sheridan Memorial Hospital over the past couple of weeks, Dr. Tom Richards, emergency department physician, offers a variety of tips on how to handle the heat.

“We are seeing people of all ages come in with symptoms that can be attributed to the heat including confusion, weakness and difficulty getting around. Some patients have either come close to or have actually passed out from the heat. Other symptoms that signal heat-related illnesses are an initial rash, swelling in the extremities and dizziness,” Richards said.

Richards added, “Prevention is the best defense against heat-related illness. People should anticipate the hot weather and take precautions before they go out in the heat.”

- Drink lots of water early and often. Don’t wait



Dr. Tom Richards

Memorial
ER Physician

until you are thirsty to begin drinking water. Avoid liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar as these fluids actually cause you to lose more body fluid.

- Stay indoors if possible – in an air conditioned place. If you don’t have air conditioning, go somewhere that does have it – even a few hours in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.

- Take a cool shower for relief. Electric fans can provide comfort, but when the temperature is above 90 degrees, they will not prevent heat-related illness.

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.

- Cut down on exercise, and when you do exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour.

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Although anyone can suffer from heat-related illness those who are at greater risk are: infants, young children, people age 65 and older, and people who have mental illness and those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure, according to Richards.

If you must be out in the heat Richards said, “Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours. Try to rest often out of the sun and heat. Protect yourself by wearing a wide-

brimmed hat and sunglasses and don’t forget the sunscreen.”

“If you suspect that you or someone around you has heat-related illness get them into a cooler, shady environment and give them sips of cool (not cold) water. If they don’t seem to be recovering or if they have passed out, they should probably be brought to the Emergency Department for treatment. Also, people who have pre-existing conditions should consider coming to the hospital to be evaluated if they become overheated,” Richards said.