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SESLHD Urges Caution During Hot Weather

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is urging people to take the risk of heat-related illness seriously with hot weather predicted this week.

Professor Mark Ferson, Director of SESLHD's Public Health Unit, said that while heat-related illness may affect anyone, certain groups are particularly vulnerable.

"These include the over 75s, infants and young children, people with a chronic medical condition and people who live alone," he said.

"Australians are accustomed to hot weather and generally consider themselves resilient to such conditions.

"However, every year, hot weather and heat waves cause illness, hospitalisations and sometimes even deaths.

"During hot weather, staying in frequent contact with your elderly friends, neighbours and relatives, and looking out for other vulnerable members of your community can provide a real safety net.

"Heat puts a lot of strain on the body and can cause dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. It can also make underlying health conditions worse. However, being prepared and taking some simple precautions can reduce the risk of heat-related illness."

These simple precautions will help minimise the risk of heat-related illness:

- Drink plenty of water, and carry some with you when you're out and about.
- Limit your intake of alcoholic, hot or sugary drinks.
- Plan your day around the heat. Stay indoors between 11am and 5pm and minimise physical activity.
- Keep the sun out of your house by shading windows with curtains, blinds or closing shutters.

- Keep windows closed during the day and opening them when it cools down at night or the early morning.
- If you have an air-conditioner, make sure it's working.
- If you don't have an air-conditioner, try to spend some time in an air-conditioned place like a shopping centre, library or cinema.
- Wear light, loose fitting clothing made from natural fibres like cotton.
- If outdoors, ensure you are protected from the sun by wearing a hat and using sunscreen.

“Signs of heat-related illness include confusion, dizziness, fainting, nausea, vomiting, weakness, headaches and loss of sweating,” Professor Ferson said.

“People showing any of these signs should seek urgent medical attention through their GP or local emergency department.

“And it is absolutely essential that children and pets are not left in cars. They can become distressed and seriously ill in a matter of minutes.”

More information about heat-health, including downloadable advice in several languages, can be found on the NSW Health website:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/beattheheat

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