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Practice sun safety in summer weather

Edmonton – Residents heading outdoors this weekend are reminded to protect themselves and their families from the harmful effects of the sun. With rising temperatures, there is an increased risk of heat-related illness such as heat exhaustion or sunstroke.

“It’s easy to get caught up in the excitement with all the festivals in town. We want to remind residents to take precautions to stay healthy and safe,” says Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services.

To avoid sunburns and heat-related illness, Dr. Predy recommends:

- Applying a sunscreen that screens out both UVA and UVB rays and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Apply it 20 minutes before going outside and reapply frequently.
- Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses (with a UVA/UVB CSA certified seal). If possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts that cover skin.
- Drinking lots of water and other non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverages to stay hydrated.

If you feel dizzy, nauseous and faint, you may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Drink plenty of water and get into a shaded area.

Hot weather can also cause heat stroke. Symptoms include high body temperature, lack of sweat, disorientation, fainting, and unconsciousness. Move the person to a shaded area, remove their outer clothing and shoes, wrap them in a wet towel, and get medical attention as soon as possible.

These guidelines are particularly important for individuals who are at greater risk of suffering from a heat-related illness, such as young children and older adults. Excessive heat may also aggravate underlying medical illness such as congestive heart failure.

Residents need to pay attention to their bodies. Normal activity that is safe on a cool day might be dangerous for you on a hot day. If you start to feel overheated, stop your activity immediately, seek shade and drink fluids," advises Dr. Predy.

Residents with any health-related concerns can call Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 780-408-LINK (5465) or outside the local calling area, toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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