Heat-Related Emergencies

It is extremely hot outside right now with abnormally high temperatures and heat-index readings. You must protect yourself from heat-related illnesses and emergencies when your body loses it's ability to cool you down properly. Once you suffer a heat-related illness or emergency, you will be more likely to relapse because your body cannot recover overnight from these. Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even deadly if unattended.

Preventing Heat-Related Illness

- **Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, clothing Use hats or your guard umbrella to reflect away the sun's rays.
- **Drink water.** Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- **Eat small meals and eat more often.** Avoid foods that are high in protein which increase metabolic heat.
- **Slow down.** Avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- **Take regular breaks** in the shade when not on duty. If you recognize that you, or someone else, is showing the signals of a heat-related illness, stop activity and find a cool place.

Know These Heat-Related Conditions

- **Heat cramps:** Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They usually involve the abdominal muscles or the legs.

- **Heat Exhaustion:** Heat exhaustion is less dangerous than heat stroke. With heat exhaustion, sweat does not evaporate as it should, possibly because of high humidity or too many layers of clothing. As a result, the body is not cooled properly. Signals include cool, moist, pale, flushed or red skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness; and exhaustion. Body temperature will be near normal.

- **Heat Stroke:** Also known as sunstroke, **heat stroke is life-threatening**. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. Signals include hot, red and dry skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can be very high--sometimes as high as 105^{o}F.

Stages of Heat-Related Illness

HEAT CRAMP SIGNALS:

The signal of the first stage is heat cramps in muscles. These cramps can be very painful. If you are caring for a person who has heat cramps, have him or her stop activity and rest. If the person is fully awake and alert, have him or her drink small amounts of cool water or a commercial sports drink.

HEAT EXHAUSTION SIGNALS:

- Cool, moist, pale skin (the skin may be red right after physical activity)
- Headache
- Dizziness and weakness or exhaustion
- Nausea
- The skin may or may not feel hot.

HEAT STROKE SIGNALS:

- Vomiting.
- Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness.
- High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105^{o}F).
- Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry.
- Rapid, weak pulse.
- Rapid, shallow breathing. (This is life threatening. Call 9-1-1 immediately)

General Care for Heat Emergencies

1. **Move the victim to a cool place**
2. **Loosen tight clothing**
3. **Remove sweat-soaked clothing**
4. **Apply cool, wet towels to the skin**
5. **Fan the victim**
6. **Give victim small amounts of cool water to drink if conscious**

If the victim refuses water, vomits or loses consciousness

1. **Call 9-1-1 immediately**
2. **Place victim on his or her side**
3. **Cool victim by using cold packs on victim's wrists, ankles, groin, neck and armpits**
4. **Monitor breathing and pulse**