



**Governor's Office of
Homeland Security &
Emergency Preparedness**

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As More Residents Return Home, Health Officials Emphasize Heat Stroke Risk

BATON ROUGE - More Louisiana residents are now returning to their homes to focus on recovery and rebuilding after Hurricane Isaac. But, the rain has stopped, temperatures are rising and many homes are still without electrical power and air conditioning, so health officials remind the public to be aware of heat stroke and take precautions.

"We know everyone's minds are on recovery, but we need everyone to take their risk of heat stroke seriously," said Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce D. Greenstein. "This is a serious condition that can kill you. So, don't take chances with your health. Drink plenty of fluids, wear light, loose-fitting clothing and sunscreen, and take breaks in the shade or a cool area frequently."

When temperatures get high and weather is humid, people are at an increased risk of becoming ill or dying from heat exposure. Children and the elderly are most vulnerable, but everyone should be aware of the risk.

People's bodies normally cool by sweating but, under intense heat conditions, sweating isn't enough, and people's bodies become unable to properly cool. In such cases, a person's body temperature rises rapidly, which can cause damage to the brain or other vital organs, and can result in death or permanent disability.

When a person is suffering from heat stroke, his or her body temperature may rise to 105 degrees or higher within 10 to 15 minutes. Warning signs of heat stroke include extremely high body temperature; red, hot and dry skin; rapid, strong pulse; throbbing headache; and dizziness, nausea, confusion and/or unconsciousness. Any of these signs can be a life-threatening emergency and require immediate medical assistance. If you experience these symptoms, focus on cooling quickly, placing cool water or ice packs on your skin, and sitting in a cool or shady area.

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Because heat illnesses can come on so rapidly, it's important to take precautions ahead of time to prevent this. If you are heading outdoors, lower your risk of heat stroke by wearing light-colored, loose-fitting clothes and a hat, drinking water regularly and stopping periodically to rest in a shaded area or indoors if you have air conditioning. It is also a good precaution to wear an effective-level sunblock or sunscreen lotion to prevent your skin from being sunburned. Before you begin working outside, drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Most importantly, do not drink alcohol if you will be outdoors in the heat. This can cause you to dehydrate faster.

For more information on heat stroke and heat-related illnesses, visit the Centers for Disease Control facts at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>.

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