For Your Health:

Staying Safe in the Summer Heat

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If June was any indication, we're in for a hot summer here in the Twin Counties. The rising temperatures are more than just uncomfortable—they can be dangerous, especially for our seniors and people with certain health conditions.

Hot weather affects everyone, but some people feel the effects more quickly than others. When the temperatures soar, we all need to pay close attention to how we're feeling and watch for signs of heat-related illness, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke. These are two of the most serious health risks during very hot weather, so it is important to know the difference between and when it is time to call 911.

Signs of heat exhaustion are dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea, weakness, headache, and muscle cramps. If you or a loved one are experiencing heat exhaustion, move to a cooler area, drink water, and use a cold compress. If symptoms do not improve, seek medical help.

For heat stroke, symptoms are confusion, dizziness, nausea, rapid pulse, and loss of consciousness. If you believe someone is experiencing heat stroke, call 911 immediately. After calling 911, move them to a cooler area, cool their skin with water and ice, and do not let them have anything to eat or drink.

Of course, it is far better to avoid both heat exhaustion and heat stroke entirely. The CDC has a few simple tips to help you stay safe during these warmer days:

- Stay in an air-conditioned indoor location as much as you can. If you do not have a place to be that has AC, both the Columbia County Department of Health and Greene County Public Health have lists of "cooling centers" — public spaces you can go to in the day to enjoy the AC.
- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. Once you are thirsty, you are already on your way to being dehydrated. Drinking water helps keeps your body's temperature down.
- Schedule outdoor activities carefully. From cutting your grass to going on a walk with a friend, try and plan for activities and chores in the early morning or evenings to avoid the hottest times of day.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Keep your jeans and long sleeve black shirt in the closet for now and opt for linen, cotton, and other breathable fabrics.
- Check on a friend or neighbor and have someone do the same for you. Heat can take over a body and lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke quickly. Make sure you are looking out for your community by making sure that everyone is okay.

While summer brings lots of fun and community events, the heat can be dangerous if we're not prepared. Stay alert to warning signs, practice healthy habits and take the time to check in on those around you to keep you and your community safe.

The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit www.columbiahealthnet.org or call 518-822-8820.