

NEWS RELEASE



For more information, contact:
Gail Wade
252 535-8111
gwade@halifaxrmc.org

For Immediate Release

HEAT PROBLEMS CAUSE INCREASE IN EMERGENCY VISITS AT HALIFAX REGIONAL

ROANOKE RAPIDS, N.C. (July 16, 2010)—The Emergency Care Center at Halifax Regional is treating more patients with heat stroke and related conditions in the past three weeks since temperatures and the humidity have reached high levels.

“We have seen an increase of approximately 7 percent in patients with heat-related conditions in the past few weeks,” said Karen Daniels, RN, vice president of nursing.

“The combination of high temperatures and humidity causes dangerous conditions for people, especially those in direct sunlight,” added Daniels. “Humidity makes it difficult for the body to cool.”

She offers this advice to stay safe in the heat:

- Avoid direct sunlight in the middle of the day. Schedule outdoor activities in the early morning or early evening.
- Wear loose, light-colored clothes and hats and use plenty of sunscreen. Babies under 6 months should get no direct sunlight.
- Drink lots of water or sports drinks. “This would be especially helpful to construction workers,” said Sheree Jenkins, RN, clinical supervisor of the Emergency Care Center. “Drink about 8 ounces an hour when in the sun.” Neither caffeinated beverages nor salt tablets are recommended.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Be careful if you or family members take medications for heart disease or mental illness. Certain drugs can reduce the body’s ability to manage heat.

Some heat-related problems are more serious than others.

Heat stroke is an emergency and requires immediate medical attention. Symptoms can include confusion, an altered mental state, and hot, dry skin. Call 911 or come immediately to the Emergency Care Center.

Sunburns are more serious than heat rashes. Sunburned children should be seen by a doctor if they are under one year or if they develop severe blisters.

Heat cramps are caused by electrolyte imbalances, explains Jenkins, who says that is an early sign that the body is having difficulty dealing with the heat. The cramps can hit the stomach, arms and legs. “Treat them by simply resting in a cool place and by drinking water or a sports drink,” said Jenkins.

Heat exhaustion can include cramps, heavy sweating, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, paleness, and changes in breathing and heart rate. “Heat exhaustion should be treated by going to a cool place, removing excess clothing and placing cool towels on your extremities,” added Jenkins.

Those patients should have small amounts of water or sports drinks or ice chips. If symptoms do not improve with these steps, the patient should be brought to the Emergency Care Center.

###

About Halifax Regional

Halifax Regional Medical Center is licensed for 204 beds, including psychiatric and nursery. A non-profit organization, Halifax Regional is fully accredited by the Joint Commission. For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.us.