

News Release

Combined Health District of Montgomery County
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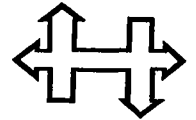
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Health Commissioner

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"Health In Many Ways"

May 17, 2004

For Immediate Release

Heat Advisory Plan Activated

Spring is a dangerous time for heat illness

The Combined Health District of Montgomery County is activating the Heat Advisory Plan for southwest Ohio. The Health District will again partner with the Wilmington, Ohio, office of the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Cincinnati Health Department to operate the plan for southwest Ohio. "We are continuing to work with county-wide agencies and governmental organizations throughout Montgomery County and southwest Ohio in developing specific mitigating actions to protect our citizens during times of excessive heat-related health risks," explained Montgomery County Health Commissioner William H. Bines.

Bines noted that the springtime months of May and June are just as dangerous as the later summer months when it comes to heat dangers. Many people associate the months of July and August with high temperatures and humidity which cause heat illness and death. However, statistically, May and June are equally dangerous. That is because, in the springtime, people have not yet acclimated to summer temperatures. "A temperature of 85 degrees combined with moderate humidity may cause heat-related health problems in May, but the same combination of temperature and humidity may not be a problem in August," explained Bines. People can tolerate higher temperatures and humidity in late summer because their bodies have adjusted to the heat. Older citizens and those taking certain types of medications can be severely affected by hot and humid weather because their bodies aren't acclimated to the heat. Some medications can also affect the body's ability to regulate its normal temperature and may actually "mask" heat illness symptoms. "We need to make sure our friends, neighbors, and loved ones understand that over-exerting yourself, or even normal daily living, during the springtime when the temperature and humidity might vary dramatically from day to day, can bring on heat illness, and on occasion, even death," stresses Bines.

Again this year, the Health District will partner with the Wilmington office of the NWS to identify potentially "offensive" air masses up to 48 hours before they reach the Miami Valley. The NWS has been working with the Health District and has increased the frequency of updating local weather information which improves the predictive accuracy of the Health District's plan. The District will declare **Heat Alerts** (which means you can expect a Heat Emergency within a day or two) and **Heat Emergencies** (which means you need to take immediate action to protect yourself and your loved ones from the heat). When a Heat Emergency is declared, it will trigger various heat mitigation plans which have been developed by governmental organizations and political jurisdictions.

The Health District works with county-wide agencies and political jurisdictions to specifically identify mitigation actions which each entity will accomplish. Each political jurisdiction has decided exactly what actions they will take to protect their citizens from heat when a **Heat Emergency** is declared by the Health District. Jurisdictions may open "cooling centers", work with Senior Citizens Centers, promote community education regarding heat symptoms and events, etc. Each jurisdiction will deal with the Heat Emergencies according to their specific plan.

This is a dynamic and ever-improving awareness and mitigation program which will help protect those in our community who are most at-risk. "We believe this coordinated effort will save lives," said Bines.