



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Summer Heat Can Be Dangerous – Even Deadly
Keep Family and Friends Safe**

GRAND RAPIDS – Heat was a factor in at least three deaths last year in Michigan. With the hot weather in the forecast, there are a few things people can do to beat the heat. Children, the elderly, and pets are especially at risk. The Kent County Health Department has a few reminders about keeping safe during hot summer days.

Never leave children or animals in a parked vehicle unattended, even with windows cracked open. "If it gets sunny and hot, the temperature inside a parked car can reach 120 degrees or more in a matter of minutes," says Cathy Raevsky, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "Heat stroke and death can occur in these dangerous situations." Last year, 33 children in the United States died of hyperthermia when left unattended in a hot car, according to the San Francisco State University Department of Geosciences.

Elderly people have a much more difficult time dealing with heat. Their bodies may not adjust as quickly to changes in temperature, and some medications can cause adverse reactions to heat. If you know elderly adults, check on them twice a day during these hot days. Encourage them to drink cold, non-alcoholic beverages to stay well-hydrated. If they appear to be suffering from dizziness, muscle weakness/cramping, vomiting, heavy sweating, or paleness, they may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Get them to a cool area, and medical treatment as soon as possible.

Pets dehydrate fast, so be sure they have fresh, clean drinking water. Keep them indoors or provide a shady place for them to stay out of the sun. Don't let them overheat: keep strenuous activity and playtime short.

Drink non-alcoholic fluids often, no matter how active you are. If you wait until you're thirsty to drink, you may already be dehydrated. (Some people may be limited in the amount of fluid they drink due to certain conditions or medications. Check with your doctor to see how much you should drink while the weather is hot.) Avoid alcohol or sugary-drinks, as they can cause you to dehydrate faster.

If you are looking for additional resources to help you during hot weather, the Heart of West Michigan United Way may be able help. Call their free informational and referral service by dialing 211 for more information.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.