

NEWS BY YOU

Risk of heat-related illnesses is higher for children

Keith Jones, director of public relations for Scottsdale Healthcare contributed this article.

Heat-related illnesses are a year-round risk to children, especially in summer when they are active outdoors in extreme temperatures and high humidity.

"Children and teenagers are at higher risk for HRI than adults, because their body shape attracts more heat from the environment, they produce more heat during exercise, and they don't sweat as much," said Dr. John Pope, medical director of pediatrics at Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center.

A heat-related illness can begin as simple muscle cramps or dehydration, but progress to loss of consciousness, heat exhaus-

tion or heat stroke.

"It may begin with simple dehydration or muscle cramps," Pope said. "Children with dehydration may have dry mouth, be thirsty, tired and weak, or become dizzy, irritable and experience a headache."

Treatment involves removing the child from the heat and hydrating.

Prevention includes limiting heat exposure and drinking plenty of fluids before, during and after exertion in the heat, whether the child is thirsty or not, Pope said.

HRI can progress to heat exhaustion, where there is an elevation of body temperature, signs of dehydration and often more discomfort, nausea, vomiting and confusion.

Heat stroke is the most serious HRI and

can be accompanied by a body temperature exceeding 104 degrees, skin redness, confusion, passing out and more serious problems with body function.

"Seek emergency medical attention if you suspect heat stroke," Pope said. "While waiting for help, you should remove your child from the heat, undress them, have them lie down and elevate their legs, cool them by spraying or sponging them with water and offer fluids."

Tips for preventing heat-related illness:

- » Never leave infants and children inside a parked car.
- » Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exertion in the heat. Don't wait for thirst.
- » Sports drinks are good for replacing

salts and fluids.

» Wear light-colored clothing and use sun block.

» Limit exertion to noon to 6 p.m., and even during early-morning hours in the summer.

» Return indoors when feeling overheated or having minor symptoms.

» Make sure a child's coach provides a break every 30 minutes for fluids and rest.

» Make sure a child's coach has an emergency-action plan and contact numbers.

The Northeast Valley's only emergency room just for children is located at Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center, 9003 E. Shea Blvd., Scottsdale. ER waiting times are updated every three minutes at www.fastERtimes.org.