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County of Dufferin issues safety advice amidst heat wave

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Dufferin County is reminding residents to take precautions during a heat warning, particularly those at greater risk of heat-related illness.

Health risks from extreme heat can be higher for young children, pregnant women, older adults, people with chronic illnesses, and those who work or exercise outdoors.

Residents are advised to speak with a health-care provider or pharmacist if they are unsure whether their medications could increase their risk of heat-related illness during hot weather. They should not stop or change any medications without professional guidance.

Certain medications may affect how the body responds to heat, such as its ability to cool down, maintain fluid balance, or recognize thirst. These medications can include diuretics, certain blood pressure medicines, antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticholinergics, stimulants, non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, opioids, and sedatives. It is important to ask your healthcare provider whether your medication may increase your risk of heat-related complications.

Residents should continue taking medications as prescribed and speak with their health-care provider before making any changes.

To reduce the risk of heat-related illness, residents are encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day, even when they do not feel thirsty, limit time spent in direct heat and avoid strenuous activity during the hottest parts of the day. Residents are reminded never to leave children or pets unattended in vehicles and are encouraged to visit public cooling locations, such as splash pads, pools or recreation centres.

The Town of Orangeville's recreation centres are open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. as cooling centres during heat warnings. Water refill stations are available for people and pets, and water bowls are available outside for dogs.

Residents without air conditioning can keep windows, doors and blinds closed during the day, open them when temperatures drop at night, use fans to circulate air, and take cool showers or apply cool cloths to the forehead, the back of the neck, and the wrists to help lower body temperature.

Keeping pets indoors when possible, limiting outdoor walks during extreme heat and avoiding hot pavement, which can burn animals' paws, are other ways to reduce the temperature's impact.

Symptoms of heat illness can include headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, rapid breathing or a rapid heartbeat. Residents are encouraged to check on neighbours, friends and family members who may be more vulnerable to heat.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 if someone has a high body temperature and is confused, experiencing dizziness or fainting, has lost consciousness, is having seizures, or has hot, dry skin or heavy sweating.

Residents can find publicly accessible cooling locations and services through Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health's Cooling, Warming and Clean Air Spaces Map.

More information on staying safe during extreme heat is available through Dufferin County's Beat the Heat Guide and Health Canada's extreme heat resources.