



# Harris County Hospital District

Media Contact: John F. Martinez  
Office: 713-566-6486  
Cell: 713-301-6250  
John\_Martinez@hchd.tmc.edu  
On-call pager: 713-566-6430

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **HCHD Cautions the Public as Houston Heat Rises**

HOUSTON (Aug. 9, 2007) – As the mercury rises, so do incidents of heat exhaustion, heat stroke and deaths resulting from the heat. Physicians and nurses from the Harris County Hospital District caution area residents to be especially vigilant about safety during these hot summer days.

The National Weather Service has issued heat advisories for Houston and the surrounding area for the next few days. A combination of above-normal temperatures and above-average relative humidity will push the heat index to well above the 100 degree mark for the next few days.

Dr. Kent Smitherman, interim medical director of internal medicine in the emergency center and the Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center at Ben Taub General Hospital, urges the public to take sensible steps to beat the heat. He reminds everyone that heat exhaustion and heat stroke can be life-threatening.

Some recommendations to avoid heat complications:

- Stay indoors, in an air-conditioned environment, not just under a fan
- Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid beverages with alcohol, caffeine or excessive sugar
- Frequently check on the elderly, people who are ill, and others who may need help
- Never leave children or pets inside a parked car

“We want everyone to stay safe this summer and remember the simple advice of drinking plenty of fluids and remaining in air-conditioned facilities,” Smitherman said. “It’s best to be cautious about the heat and learn about its dangers.”

If one must be outdoors, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends limiting outdoor activity to morning and evening hours. For those who must work outdoors, the CDC recommends regular rest periods in shady areas to recover from the heat. Those feeling lightheaded, confused, weak or faint should seek air-conditioned areas and medical attention.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation’s third most populous county. It provides more than 1 million health care visits each year to uninsured, underinsured and medically needy residents of Harris County. It operates three major hospitals, 12 community health centers, 13 homeless shelter clinics, eight school-based clinics, a dental center and four mobile health units.

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