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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES
HEAT AND AIR QUALITY ADVISORY**

With temperatures soaring into the nineties this week, the Westchester County Health Department is advising residents to take precautions against heat-related illnesses. An air quality advisory has also been issued for the area today and tomorrow.

“The high temperatures and high humidity levels increase the risk of heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses, particularly for the elderly, infants and people with serious health conditions,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester. “All need to take things a little slower on days like this and be sure to drink plenty of fluids and find ways to stay cool.”

Heat stroke is a serious and life-threatening condition that claims many lives throughout the country each year. Symptoms include hot, dry skin; shallow breathing; a rapid, weak pulse; and confusion. Heat stroke occurs when a person's body temperature exceeds 105 degrees Fahrenheit and it can render the victim unconscious. Anyone suffering from heat stroke needs to receive emergency medical treatment immediately. While waiting for emergency personnel, the patient should be moved to a cool area out of direct sunlight and bathed with cool water. If possible, he or she should be placed in an air-conditioned room or even an air conditioned car.

Heat exhaustion is another heat-related illness characterized by heavy sweating, weakness and cold, pale, clammy skin. There may be fainting and vomiting. If someone appears to be suffering from heat exhaustion, he or she should be moved to a cool area out of direct sunlight, sponge bathed with cool water and fanned. Also, give sips of water to the individual every 15 minutes for one hour.

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The Health Department recommends these preventive measures to prevent heat-related illnesses:

- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Don't drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar - these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors, ideally, in an air-conditioned place. If your house or apartment isn't air-conditioned, try spending a few hours at the shopping mall, public library or even the grocery store. A few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
- Take a cool shower or bath and reduce or eliminate strenuous activities during the hottest time of the day.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to reflect heat and sunlight.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- NEVER leave anyone - a person or animal - in a closed, parked vehicle. This is life threatening.
- Neighbors should check on elderly residents in their area or apartment complex to make sure they are safe.

In addition to high temperatures and humidity, the United States Environmental Protection Agency is also reporting moderate levels of ozone today and the Department of Environmental Conservation has issued an air quality advisory due to an elevated level of fine particles in the air for the Metropolitan New York City Region, which includes Westchester.

“People with breathing and heart problems, as well as children and the elderly, may be particularly sensitive to ground-level ozone and particulate matter. These groups may wish to limit strenuous outdoor activity when particulate matter and ozone levels are elevated,” said Dr. Lipsman.

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Ozone is the principal component of the mixture of air pollutants known as "smog" that is produced from the action of sunlight on air contaminants from automobile exhausts and other sources. Ozone levels are most likely to be elevated in the afternoon and early evening on hot, sunny days.

Fine particles in the air, also referred to as particulate matter or PM 2.5, are so small that several thousand could fit on the period at the end of this sentence. Being so tiny, they are able to pass through the respiratory tract and reach the lungs. Long-term exposure may worsen asthma and heart disease, while short term effects may include irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, leading to coughing, sneezing, and shortness of breath.

For more information and tips of safety during hot weather, residents should visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health or call the Health Department's **Stay Cool Line at (914) 813-5620**.

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