

Department of Health issues warning for heat-related illness in southeast NM

Written by Staff Reports
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The New Mexico Department of Health encourages persons in southeast New Mexico to rest, drink a lot of water, and get under shade when they are outdoors to reduce the risk of heat-related illness as the temperatures will remain high this week, especially in the following counties: Chaves, Eddy, Lea, Roosevelt and Quay.

NMDOH conducts surveillance for heat-related illness and has received reports of 21 emergency department visits and two hospitalizations in the past week due to HRI. Through recent data analysis, the New Mexico Environmental Public Health Tracking, Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau, Epidemiology and Response Division, has found that even though temperatures of 86 degrees Fahrenheit may not seem high, this is the temperature at which people start to go to the hospital for heat-related problems. It is anticipated that these high temperatures will persist into next week.

“People in southeast New Mexico who work outdoors should especially take precautions such as frequently going indoors to a place with evaporative cooling or central air conditioning to cool off, staying well-hydrated, and by taking breaks often in shaded areas,” said Cabinet Secretary Kathy Kunkel. “These steps are also recommended if you play sports or are hiking, fishing, and camping so you can avoid getting ill.”

Heat-related illness can have many symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, cramping, and weakness. To help New Mexicans and visitors spot the signs of heat-related illnesses, and to help them avoid becoming ill, NMDOH offers tips at <https://nmtracking.org/health/heatstress/Heat.html>

During the hottest part of the day, 11 am to 6 pm, you should avoid being outside if you can. To cool off, NMDOH suggests you visit public spaces such as libraries, community centers, senior centers, local museums or learning centers, and public swimming pools. If your community offers a cooling center or station, stop by. If school is in session, it is recommended that classes have recess and P.E. early in the morning and move indoors for the hotter hours.

In addition, NMDOH urges New Mexicans to never leave anyone or pets in a parked car. While running errands, take babies, children, pets, and elders inside with you.