



# MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Too Hot to Handle

### Tips from St. John Ambulance on How to Recognize and Treat Heat Related Illnesses

**July 20, 2011 (Toronto, ON)** – With most of North America in the grip of record high temperatures there has been a drastic increase in the number of heat related illnesses reported. Heat related illnesses can strike quickly and with little exertion, so it is important for people to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat related illnesses.

#### **Heat Cramps**

Painful muscle cramps primarily in the legs and abdomen accompanied by excessive sweating. This is caused by losing too much water and salt through sweating usually related to excessive physical activity in hot weather. This condition is not serious and can be easily reversed with some basic first aid.

#### First Aid

Ensure the person is put at rest in a cool place and given as much water, or drinks with electrolytes and carbohydrates as they can manage. If the cramps don't subside seek medical help.

#### **Heat Exhaustion**

More serious than heat cramps, the symptoms include: excessive sweating, dilated pupils, complaints of dizziness, blurred vision, headaches, and cramps. The casualty may also have cool, clammy skin, a weak rapid pulse, rapid shallow breathing, vomiting and may go unconscious.

#### First Aid

Give the casualty water to drink, as much as he/she will take. If the casualty vomits, do not give them anything by mouth and seek medical attention right away. Place them at rest on their back in a cool place and remove any excessive clothing and loosen clothing around the neck and waist. If they go unconscious put them in the recovery position and get medical help, continue monitoring their condition.

**Heatstroke (Sunstroke):** *This is a life-threatening condition, without immediate action heatstroke can result in permanent brain damage or death.* If heatstroke is suspected seek medical attention immediately or call 911. Symptoms include, a rapid and full pulse that gets weaker and harder to feel in later stages, noisy breathing, flushed skin, hot and dry skin or hot and sweaty skin (when heatstroke is related to exertion), restlessness, a headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, convulsions and eventually unconsciousness.

#### First Aid

Call for medical assistance. It is critical that the body temperature is lowered as quickly as possible. Move the casualty to a cool, shaded place and immerse him/her in cool not cold water (watch them closely for any changes). If immersion is not possible - cover him/her with a wet sheet and fan the casualty, or sponge him/her with cool water particularly in the armpits, neck and groin.

For over 125 years St. John Ambulance has been teaching first aid in Ontario. Today we train over 155,000 Ontarians annually in first aid and other health care related courses and remains dedicated to saving lives at work, home and play. With over 4,000 volunteers contributing over half a million hours of community service a year, St. John Ambulance is an integral part of the community offering such unique and innovative programs as; medical first response, disaster response, car seat clinics, health and safety related youth programs and therapy dog services. As a charitable, humanitarian organization, proceeds from St. John Ambulance's first aid training and first aid product sales directly support these vital community services programs. For more information on St. John Ambulance training courses and volunteer opportunities contact: [www.sja-mississauga.ca](http://www.sja-mississauga.ca).

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