



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Its getting Hot!

It is that time of the year when the temperature gets high signaling that the rainy season is around the corner. It's also a time when diseases and illnesses spread quickly -- such as malaria, heat stroke, heat exhaustion and eye problems.

Climate change is a big threat to public health. This threat according to the World Health Organization changes the way we must look at protecting vulnerable populations.

According to health experts most of the diseases that come with climate change affect children under the age of five. These children are most vulnerable because they haven't yet fully developed their immune systems to combat diseases -- such as malaria and diarrhea.

It is estimated by the World Health Organization that most deaths that happen in Africa are due to malaria. This disease is caused by a female mosquito called the Anopheles which breeds well in hot and humid temperatures -- and Zambia's temperature at the moment is ideal for this mosquito to thrive.

The Weekly Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

The Problem: Hot Weather and Health

Hot temperature can lead to increased dehydration. The human body loses a lot of water in hot weather. When the body loses a lot of water a person becomes weak and it may even lead to death.

Too much heat also affects the eyesight, the eyes become itchy or teary causes us to start rubbing them. This creates a new problem because if the hands are dirty or sweaty and come in contact with the eyes --harmful bacteria can get into the eye.

Handling food with dirty hands can also lead to another problem: diarrhea.

Doing too much work like gardening, on a hot day, spending too much time in the sun or staying too long in an overheated place can cause heat-related illnesses.

Still another problem that is triggered by hot weather is sunburn. This is more of a problem for light-skinned people, but everyone can experience sunburn and not only is it uncomfortable, it can lead to skin cancer if a person's skin is exposed to the sun over a long period of time.

It is best to cover exposed areas with clothing and cover the head and ears with a hat.

For the body to work well, it needs to stay at a normal temperature. If our bodies heat up even by a few degrees, it starts to cool itself. The most obvious and familiar reaction is that the person starts to sweat. As the hot perspiration evaporates off the skin, the person is cooled down. Therefore to keep this process going the individual needs to drink a lot of water on hot days.

Activities for Journalists

Trees are an important source of cooling the body. Trees are like a natural ‘air conditioner’ because they absorb the heat for their own production of fruits and other functions. It is important therefore to have at least some trees at home that can provide shade. It is also important to encourage members of the community to plant trees and to tell them about the many benefits of trees.

Another thing that can help people adjust to the hot weather is to drink lots of water. There is need to encourage communities to have a water borehole nearby or to store enough water in their homes in order to prevent dehydration. There is also need to encourage people to carry water with them so that they drink when they feel thirsty. Generally, the more you sweat the more water you should be drinking, because the water leaving your body as sweat needs to be replenished. If you don’t sweat, you need to pay particular attention to your body and drink lots of water.

To prevent other diseases that come with hot weather there is need to cut grass around the yard. It is also important to drain standing water that is around the yard, such as is barrels or old tires, to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in stagnant water as these insects thrive in hot and humid environment. Killing mosquitoes helps prevent malaria.

Headaches are very common in the hot season. This, too, can be attributed to the body not getting enough water. Most of these headaches are related to a lack of water. Benson Zulu a final year medical student at the University Teaching Hospital notes that most of the

patients that come to the hospital have treatable headaches. He says they just need to drink more water. He reminds us that most people are occupied with working in the heat – and who don’t drink enough water – are at risk. Farmers are particularly at risk. He says farmers lose a lot of water while in the field and this can lead to dehydration and serious health issues.

A person can have heat stroke when the temperature is very high. Some of the warning signs include a very high body temperature, red, hot, and dry skin, a rapid, strong pulse, a throbbing headache, dizziness and nausea.

If you see any of these signs in yourself or anyone else, it is advisable to do the following: get into a shady area, cool the body down rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, spray the victim with cool water or sponge the person with cool water. You should also monitor the body temperature, and continue cooling efforts until the body temperature drops to the normal range of 38 or 39 Celsius. Get to the hospital as soon as you can.

Talk to someone at a health clinic about heat-related illnesses and get them to describe what needs to be done. Interview a person who has suffered from heat stroke – let them describe what happened. Launch a tree-planting project with a local environmental organization. Produce public service announcements and run them regularly during the hot season.

Useful Link

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