Most people look forward to warmer weather in order to exercise outside more often; but when a heat wave hits, it can be difficult and even dangerous to do extended physical activities outdoors. Sharolyn Jackson, State Program Director for Walk Kansas, wrote a great article on how to meet the recommendation of at least 150 minutes/week of moderate intensity exercise even when it is hot outside. These are her recommendations!

Get your steps. If the thought of being outside makes you melt, think of ways to get your daily steps indoors. You can walk the perimeter of a large store, walk in a shopping mall, or take care of errands while staying in an area that has air conditioning. Avoid walking and exercising during the hottest part of the day. Adjust your routine so you can walk closer to sunrise and sunset.

Hydrate well. Drinking water is a good way to keep your body nourished and help prevent heat exhaustion. Be sure to hydrate well before and during any activity. Depending on the situation, you may need a sports drink or food to replace lost electrolytes (sodium, potassium, and magnesium). Foods that help you stay hydrated include watermelon, cucumbers, cantaloupe, grapefruit, berries, and iceberg lettuce, to name a few. You can also gauge if you are hydrated by monitoring urine volume output and color. A large amount of light colored, diluted urine is a sign you are hydrated, while dark colored, concentrated urine means you are dehydrated.

Also consider flavored water! Add frozen berries or citrus zest to water when you make ice cubes. For a clean refreshing taste, add freshly cut cucumbers to water. Flavors that pair well together include lime and raspberry, watermelon and rosemary, pineapple and mint, blackberry and sage, cranberry and orange, lemon and ginger, strawberry and vanilla. Flavored water is also healthful and inexpensive!

Know the signs. Heat exhaustion can occur when you are dehydrated and have lost an excessive amount of water and salt through sweat. During heat exhaustion, your body can become overwhelmed by heat and your sweat response can stop working properly. Signs and symptoms include: dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, heavy sweating, nausea, headache, tiredness, fainting, and skin that is pale, cool, and moist.

When you recognize any symptoms of heat exhaustion, stop the activity and rest. Find shade, shelter or a cool room. Drink cool, non-alcoholic beverages, splash yourself with cool water, and place a wet, cold towel around your neck. If heat exhaustion is left untreated, it can lead to heat stroke. This is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment.

It’s important to stay physically active throughout the summer, but remember to keep your cool! Contact the Dickinson County Extension Office for additional resources.