



HEAT SAFETY TIPS FOR ATHLETES AND COACHES

The N.C. Division of Public Health encourages young athletes and coaches to be especially careful when exerting themselves during high temperatures in North Carolina. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, when the air temperature exceeds 95°F (35°C), children have a lower exercise tolerance and ability to adapt to extreme temperatures than adults. Adolescents' ability to adapt falls in between.

With pre-season practices underway, it is critical for young athletes to take time to adjust to the heat to minimize the risk of heat illness. By slowly increasing heat tolerance, the athlete is better able to exercise safely and effectively in warm to hot conditions. This doesn't happen quickly. Children under 10 should adjust with short daily exposures to exercising in high temperatures – 30 to 45 minutes per day – for up to 10 days. The National Athletic Trainers' Association recommends that adolescent athletes should allow up to 14 days to become fully adjusted, gradually building intensity and duration of work in the heat.

Here are some tips for coaches and athletes to play it safe during hot weather:

Recommendations for Athletes and Parents

- Wear light-colored and lightweight clothing. If clothes become saturated with sweat, change into dry clothes.
- Drink cold water as frequently as possible. During long bouts of intense exercise, it's a good idea to use a sports drink that contains sodium to replace the sodium lost in sweat. Most sports drinks contain adequate salt. Salt tablets are not recommended.
- Pay attention to early signs and symptoms of dehydration, which include: dry or sticky mouth, thirst, headache, dizziness, cramps, and/or excessive fatigue.
- Tell your coach right away if you feel dehydrated or sick. Don't let embarrassment keep you on the field.
- Sleep at least six to eight hours at night in a cool environment, eat a well-balanced diet, and stay hydrated throughout the day, even when you are not on the playing field.
- Track body weight to make sure you are properly hydrated. Your goal should be less than 2 percent body-weight change during a practice session.

Recommendations for Coaches

- Know the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness. Educate athletes and coaches regarding the prevention, recognition, and treatment of heat illnesses.
- Be aware not only of heat, but of humidity levels when evaluating conditions for practice. A good measure is the wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) – the standard index of temperature and humidity combined. Measuring devices are available commercially.
- Schedule training sessions to avoid the hottest part of the day (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- Enforce regular rest periods in the shade and see that players drink water every 15 minutes during hot and humid weather.

- Substitute players frequently to allow adequate rest periods.
- Encourage athletes to stay hydrated throughout the day, before and after practice.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, Journal of Athletic Training, MayoClinic.com

How much water?

When a child is participating in prolonged physical activity, the following guidelines are recommended:

A child weighing 88 lbs should drink 150 mL [5 oz] of cold tap water or a flavored salted beverage every 20 minutes.

A child weighing 132 lbs should drink 250 mL [9 oz] cold tap water or a flavored salted beverage every 20 minutes.

Source: *Climatic Heat Stress and the Exercising Child and Adolescent, PEDIATRICS Vol. 106 No.1 July 2000*