

## Heat-illness and Hydration

Playing outdoors in hot weather can be enjoyable, but sometimes dangerous. Each year, young athletes and children die from [heat-related illness](#). All athletes, coaches and parents need to take precautions during hot weather to ensure that their children are playing safely. The severity of heat injury ranges from mild heat cramps to heat stroke and even death. But there is one important fact to remember — heat-related illness is preventable.

### Heat Illness Prevention

- **Know Signs of Heat-Related Illness** - Symptoms of heat illness include: Cramps; very high body temperature; red, hot, dry skin (athlete is not sweating) or heavy sweating; rapid pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea/vomiting; confusion; loss of consciousness; paleness.
- **Stay Hydrated** - Drink plenty of fluids during vigorous or outdoor activities (including sunbathing), especially on hot days. Drinks of choice include water and sports drinks; avoid alcohol and fluids with caffeine such as tea, coffee and cola, as these can lead to dehydration.
- **Dress to Protect** - Dress your child in light-colored, lightweight, tightly-woven, loose-fitting clothing on hot days. Protect children from the sun by having them wear a hat and sunglasses and by using an umbrella. Use a sunscreen that is at least SPF (sun protection factor) 15.
- **Schedule Around the Heat** - Plan vigorous activity and sports for cooler times of the day. Take rest periods in shady or cool areas. Increase time spent outdoors gradually to get your child's body used to the heat. Try to spend as much time indoors as possible on very hot and humid days.
- **The Importance of Cooling Off** - Teach children to take frequent drink breaks and "wet down" or mist themselves with a spray bottle to avoid becoming overheated.
- **Car Safety** - Do not leave children unattended in a hot automobile.
- **Exercise Safety** - Teach children to warm-up and cool-down before and after exercising.
- **Be Prepared** - If your child has a medical condition or is taking medication, consult your child's physician for further advice for preventing heat-related illnesses.
- **At Risk** - Those at risk for heat-related illness are children and adolescents who are out-of-shape or children who may need time to get acclimated to the heat.

### Summer Sport Safety

- **Smart Scheduling** - Schedule workouts for the cooler times of the day. Plan for timed water and rest breaks every 30 minutes during activities. During these breaks, require kids to drink fluids. This also gives the coach or trainer a chance to monitor the athletes.
- **Allow Time for Warm Up** - Give overweight or out-of-shape kids proper time to adjust to the heat.
- **Allow Time to Cool Off** - Have shade, ice and a kiddie pool available for emergency treatment and rapid cooling.
- **Proper Clothing** - Athletes should wear hats with brims and light-colored, breathable clothing, if possible.
- **Asthma is Dangerous in Heat** - Parents of children with asthma should closely monitor their children. Exercise is often a trigger for attacks, and outdoor air quality can also be a factor.

- **Keep an Eye on Those At Risk** - Children who have suffered from a heat-related illness in the past, or are currently taking cold or allergy medications or certain treatments for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), should be carefully monitored.
- **Know Signs of Heat-Related Illness** - Cramps; very high body temperature; red, hot, dry skin (athlete is not sweating) or heavy sweating; rapid pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea/vomiting; confusion; loss of consciousness; paleness.

### Preventing Dehydration

- **Never Rely on Thirst** - Thirst is a poor indicator of how hydrated the body is. When a young athlete begins to feel thirsty, he or she may already be dehydrated.
- **Prehydrate** - Thirty minutes before activity, have your child drink until he or she is no longer thirsty — plus another eight ounces. Kids weighing less than 90 pounds should drink five ounces for every 20 minutes of activity. Kids weighing more than 90 pounds should drink eight ounces every 20 minutes.
- **Choose The Right Drink** - Water is best if the activity lasts one hour or less. For activities lasting more than one hour, kids should drink a fluid with carbohydrates (sugar) and electrolytes. Drinks like Gatorade and Powerade were specially designed for re-hydration during exercise and contain the right amount of carbohydrates. Fluids like fruit juice and soda have too much sugar and can cause cramping.
- **Drink It, Don't Pour it** - Your child may think pouring cold water on his head or face feels great, but it will not make him more hydrated.

### Babies and Heat

- **Sun Rules** - Keep your baby out of direct sunlight as much as you can, and only apply sunscreen to babies 6 months of age or older.
- **Stay Hydrated** - Increase your water intake if you're breastfeeding, and only offer breast milk or formula to babies under 6 months of age. For babies over 6 months of age, offer sips of water in an open cup. Avoid offering juice.
- **Don't Leave in Cars** - Never leave your baby unattended in the car, even for a quick second.
- **Sun-Protective Clothing** - Have your baby wear a hat with a brim at least three inches wide any time he or she is outside. It will protect their head, face and eyes.
- **Introduce to Heat Gradually** - Increase time spent outdoors gradually to get your baby's body used to the heat.
- **Look for Signs of Heat-Related Illness** - high body temperature; red, hot, dry skin; sweating more than usual; rapid pulse; nausea/vomiting; a decrease in the number of wet diapers.