



GUIDE TO HEAT AND DEHYDRATION INJURY PREVENTION

Too many high school, college, and professional athletes have died of heat exhaustion and dehydration. Do not allow this to happen to your child. Coaches must follow these guidelines and be properly trained in CPR/AED use.

- Weigh the athletes before and after practice and replace each pound lost with 16 - 24 oz of water. This water must be sipped throughout the remainder of the day after practice to get the best absorption. Dehydration can occur over several days to weeks of practice and incomplete rehydration (observe urine color - if dark yellow, hydrate). This is why athletes can die in weather in the 70's with little humidity.
- An electrolyte replacement drink may be needed in practices greater than one hour if the athlete is a salty sweater (white rim on cap or armpit of shirt – if in doubt, lick your sweaty skin – if it tastes salty use an electrolyte replacement).
- Acclimate to the heat over 7 - 14 days:
 - Days 1 – 5: One practice per day, three hour maximum time limit.
 - Days 1 – 2: No protective gear except a helmet allowed.
 - Days 3 – 5: Helmets and shoulder pads only.
 - Day 6: Full gear and full contact allowed.
 - Days 6 – 14: Two-a-day practices must be followed the next day by a single practice day or a rest day. On two-a-day practice days each practice session must not exceed three hours (maximum five hours total daily practice time) and the two practice sessions must be separated by at least three hours in a cool environment.
- Coaches must pay attention to the heat index - be very careful when in the red zone – walk through only, no vigorous practice!
- Have a kiddie pool (Toys-R-Us for \$15.00) filled with water and ice ready for athletes for break time and after practice. At minimum, the athletes should walk through it and if necessary perform full body immersion.
- If the field has no shaded areas, get an EZ Up tent. Break time must be in the shade.
- Have a buddy system to quickly recognize a problem. Football teams are large and it is difficult for the coaches to observe everyone.
- Parents, athletes and coaches must know these guidelines.

References

1. Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletics, Journal of the National Athletic Trainers Association, June 2009, pp.332-333.
2. NOAA's National Weather Service Heat Index Table.
3. Prevention of Heat Illness, NCAA 2008-2009 Sports Medicine Handbook, pp.30-32.