

How to Avoid Heat-related Illness

Tips for school athletic and band programs

Make sure participants have had a physical and know if anyone has a history of heat-related illness. Note if participants have a medical condition or are on medication that may make them more susceptible to heat exhaustion. (for example - asthma, diabetes, overweight)

Schedule practices early in the day or late in the evening - before 9 am and after 6 pm. If possible, practice in an air-conditioned building during the hottest weather.

Acclimatize participants to the heat. Start with shorter practices and build up over time.

Provide drinks - cool water, sports drinks, fruit juice. Avoid beverages with caffeine and avoid extremely cold beverages. This can cause severe stomach cramps.

Drink fluids every 20 minutes during practice as well as before and after exercise.

Drink before you feel thirsty, by the time you're thirsty, you're starting to dehydrate.

Provide shaded areas to rest in with circulating air.

Give athletes time out of helmets and pads every 30 minutes.

Never let children use salt tablets unless directed by a physician.

Use the buddy system - partner up participants. Make sure your partner is doing ok and vice versa. The same goes for the coaching or instructional staff. Everyone has a buddy.

Know the symptoms of heat illness: heavy sweating, chills, nausea, incoherence, fatigue/tiredness, weakness, muscle cramps, rapid pulse, visual disturbance, throbbing headache, dizziness, cool, moist or pale skin in the early stages.

Anyone experiencing any of the symptoms listed above should be taken out of practice immediately and taken to an air-conditioned or shady place and given cool drinks.

If anyone exhibits the following symptoms, call 911 immediately – vomiting; fainting; rapid weak pulse; rapid shallow breathing; confusion or decreased alertness; red, hot, dry skin.