

Playing it Safe when Playing Sports in the Heat

A Guide for Soccer Players

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Hydrate - Before, During, and After Exercise

- Heat illness is a serious risk when exercising in heat and humidity and the single most preventable sport injury. Taking simple precautions greatly lowers the risk of heat illness and minimizes any untoward effects of exercising in the heat.
- Children, compared to adults, are more likely to suffer from heat illness when exercising in the heat and they progress into heat illness much faster.
- Know the Warning Signs of heat illness and act **immediately** to remedy the situation.
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Headache
 - Blurred vision
 - Muscle cramping
 - Chills
 - Sweating stops
 - Passing out

Prevent the onset of Heat Illness:

1. Begin drinking fluids **2 hours prior to exercise**, attempting to consume **16 oz. of fluid** during this time. Drink another **6-8 oz. of fluid about 15 minutes before exercise**.
2. During exercise 4-6 oz. of fluid should be consumed at 15-20 minute intervals, especially in extreme heat and humidity.
3. Thirst is a **poor** indicator of the need for fluid. Athletes cannot rely on thirst to dictate the amount of fluid they drink. They need to drink on a fluid schedule.
4. After exercise, children should be encouraged to drink another 16-24 oz. of fluid *within the first 2 hours*. Ideally, athletes should weigh themselves without clothes before exercise and again after exercise to determine how much fluid was lost, and then replace the lost fluid within several hours after the exercise.
5. Fluids should be cool and as palatable as possible. Children will consume cool flavored drinks most readily.
6. Sport drinks are specifically formulated to include the appropriate amounts of carbohydrates and electrolytes (minerals that help maintain the body's fluid balance) while insuring rapid stomach emptying. The sooner the fluid leaves the stomach and reaches the working muscles, the better. The sodium and potassium contained in these drinks enhance thirst and help replace these minerals lost in sweat. Sport drinks should **not** be diluted.
7. Avoid carbonated beverages and those containing caffeine or herbs. Caffeine is a diuretic and causes fluid loss and can cause jitters.
8. Clothing should be lightweight and made of breathable material, preferably material that wicks moisture away from the body. Cotton, which is very absorbent and traps moisture, is not the ideal material against the skin. In the heat, goalies should remove their team jerseys before putting on the goalie jersey.
9. A cold, wet washcloth applied to the neck, forehead, wrists and forearms helps to cool down a hot athlete.
10. Whenever possible, children should be kept out of direct sunlight and in the shade while sitting on the sidelines. Radiant heat from direct sunlight causes additional fluid loss. A portable canopy/tent is a valuable piece of equipment for soccer teams.