Heat Illnesses

Heat illnesses are a major concern in athletics, especially here in Tucson due to the extreme temperatures. As a coach you are responsible for monitoring each athlete during daily practices and competitions. You must be familiar with common heat illnesses, their signs and symptoms and treatment to ensure proper care for your student athletes.

### Heat Cramps

**Signs and Symptoms**
- Dehydration
- Thirst
- Sweating
- Cramps
- Fatigue

**Treatment**
- Cease activity
- Sports drink or water
- Mild stretching
- Massage
- Ice

### Heat Exhaustion

**Signs and Symptoms**
- Normal or elevated body temp (97-104°F)
- Profuse sweating
- Cool and clammy skin
- Dehydration
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Fast & weak pulse
- Decreased urine output
- Muscle cramps
- Chills

**Treatment**
- Remove excess clothing
- Cool the athlete with ice bags/towels/fans
- Move to shaded area
- Rehydrate
- **911 if symptoms do not resolve**

### Heat Stroke

**Signs and Symptoms**
- High body temp (104°F and ↑)
- Dizzy
- Drowsy
- Irrational or confused
- Irritable
- Disoriented
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Dehydrated
- Hot & dry skin (little to no sweating)
- Increased pulse rate (100-120 bpm)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

**Treatment**
- Immerse athlete in cold water tub immediately
- **CALL 911**
- Monitor vitals
- Continue cooling during transport

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**Posting of Heat Index**
The heat index for your site will be posted by the Certified Athletic Trainer in the fall until October 1st and again during the month of May. Practice may have to be modified based on the daily heat index. The Athletic Trainer will post the wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) or the need for practice modifications based on the following format: no modification, mild, moderate or extreme danger. It is the responsibility of the coach to know the daily heat index and make adjustments to the practice schedule. These modifications may include but are not limited to: changing practice time, varying the amount of equipment worn, increasing the frequency of water and rest breaks.

For all sports except football, practices should be delayed, rescheduled, or moved indoors when the WBGT reaches or exceeds 82 degrees. If these modifications are not possible, changes in intensity, clothing/uniforms, and length of practice should be enacted after collaboration between the coach and athletic trainer.
As related to football, practices should be delayed, rescheduled, or moved indoors when the WBGT reaches 78 degrees. If these modifications are not possible, changes in intensity, clothing/uniforms, and length of practice should be enacted after collaboration between the coach and athletic trainer. Football is regulated at a lower temperature due to the nature of football equipment and its impairment on the body’s ability to regulate temperature.

**Prevention of Heat Illnesses**

Prevention of heat illnesses is essential. Recognizing the posted heat index and making necessary practice modifications is a great start in preventing heat illnesses. There are several other factors that can influence the rate of heat illnesses occurring with your team. They include:

- Acclimatization
- Wear light color & light weight clothing
- Practice modification
- Weight monitoring pre & post practices
- Frequent water breaks
- Good nutrition
- Proper rest periods
- Recognition of “At Risk” individuals & making necessary modifications