

Heat Illness

Suffering from heat illness is a growing concern for athletes. There are different stages of heat illness that can occur in athletics. These include heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. If your student-athlete is experiencing any of the following they should stop activity and seek medical attention from the Athletic Trainer.

Prevention

- Eat at least 3 healthy meals and 3 healthy snacks the day before practice or game.
- Eat a good meal at least 2 hours prior to practice or game.
- Drink plenty of fluids
 - .5 oz to 1 oz per pound of body weight daily.
- Replenish lost fluids within 1-2 hours after activity.
 - 2-3 oz per pound lost
- Wear light-colored and light-weight clothing during activity.

Heat Cramps: Muscle spasms that result from an inadequate amount of water and sodium during exercise.

Signs and Symptoms

- Intense pain that is not associated with straining a muscle.
- Persistent muscle contraction.

Treatment

- Re-establish normal hydration and replace sodium losses.
- Stretching and massage of the involved muscle to help alleviate pain.

Heat Exhaustion: Moderate illness characterized by a depletion of body fluids and electrolytes resulting from strenuous physical activity and environmental heat stress.

Signs and Symptoms

- Loss of coordination
- Dizziness or fainting
- Dehydration
- Profuse sweating or pale skin
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Persistent muscle cramps

Treatment

- Immediately remove athlete from play and move to a shaded or air-conditioned area
- Remove excess clothing and equipment
- If athlete is not nauseated, rehydrate with chilled water or sports drink. If unable to rehydrate orally, transport athlete to nearest emergency facility to rehydrate intravenously.
- Monitor heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate
- Transport to emergency facility if improvement is not noted.

Heat Stroke: Severe illness characterized by central nervous system abnormalities and potential tissue damage resulting from elevated body temperatures caused by strenuous physical activity and environmental heat stress.

Signs and Symptoms

- Increased core body temperature
- CNS dysfunction such as altered consciousness, seizures, confusion, emotional instability, or irrational behavior.
- Headache, dizziness, or weakness
- Hot and/or dry skin
- Increased heart rate, decreased blood pressure, or fast breathing
- Dehydration

Treatment

- Aggressive and immediate whole body cooling, cold water immersion
- If left untreated fatal consequences may occur within in vital organ systems
- It is recommended to cool first and transport second if onsite rapid cooling and adequate medical supervision is available.