

## Heat Illness

Heat illness is on the rise and is most common in the months of July and August. This is commonly seen in athletics but can happen to anyone. Heat illness happens when the body has an increased temperature (due to hot weather or exercise) and the body's ability to cool itself is overwhelmed. Here are some facts and tips to help you avoid this preventable illness:

- Risk Factors for Developing Heat Illness
  - Hot, humid environments
  - Dehydration
  - High intensity exercise
  - Use of heavy equipment or clothing (sports with pads or wearing inappropriate clothing for the weather)
  - Short term illness or fever
  - Eating disorders
  - Obesity
  - De-conditioning
  - Certain medications (Diuretics)
  - Chronic or Long term disease
  - Alcohol consumption
  - Other substance abuse
  - Recent move to hot humid weather
- Symptoms:
  - Dark colored urine
  - Dry mouth
  - Thirst
  - Weakness
  - Headaches
  - Dizziness
  - Chills
  - More serious symptoms:
    - Difficulty breathing
    - Increased body temperature to dangerous levels
    - Muscle cramps
    - Nausea
    - Tingling in the limbs
    - Death may occur

Do your best to avoid heat illness by following these tips:

- Alert your coach or athletic trainer or anyone if not participating in a sport at anytime you don't feel well.

- Allow for acclimatization (adaptation) to hot, humid conditions. Gradually increase workout intensity and duration over a 10 to 14 day period. This helps train your body to drink more, increase blood volume and sweat better.
- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing to help promote heat loss.
- Do strenuous exercise in the early morning or late evening, not during the heat of the day. If this cannot be avoided, modify workout intensity and increase the number and length of rest breaks.
- When exercising outside, stay in the shade as much as possible.
- Monitor hydration status. Ideally, body weight should be taken before and after workout to determine sweat loss.
- Check that urine color is pale like lemonade, not concentrated like apple juice.
- Drink up when it's hot and when it's not! There should be unlimited access to fluids throughout practices or competition.
  - Two hours before exercise drink at least 16 oz (2 cups) fluid
  - During exercise drink at least 7–10 oz (about one cup) every 10–20 minutes
  - After a workout or competition, drink 24 oz (3 cups) per pound body weight lost through sweat
- Choose cool, lightly sweetened, flavored beverages with sodium, like sports drinks, when possible. Flavoring and sodium may encourage you to drink sooner and drink more so you hydrate better
  - Water does not help replace sodium and other electrolytes that are lost through sweat
  - If only water is available, drink early and often
- Although they may be helpful for muscle cramps, salt tablets do not prevent dehydration or subsequent heat illness.
- Limit carbonated beverages and fruit juices during exercise since they can upset your stomach.

These tips may have an athletic affiliation but they are useful for working outside in your garden or on your property. Heat illness will sneak up on you so please stay hydrated this summer. Take your water or sports drink to the parade with you to help keep you going throughout the day.

Sources: [Stopsportsinjuries.org](http://Stopsportsinjuries.org) and American Medical Association for Sports Medicine