

Tips for the young athlete

How you can avoid heat-related illness during practice and play

When participating in sports activities during warm weather, it is very important to pay attention to your “heat health” by taking the following precautions to prevent your body from overheating, which can lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or even life-threatening heatstroke.

- ❖ Reduce the intensity of activities that last longer than 15 minutes when air temperature and humidity are high
- ❖ When beginning a strenuous exercise program or traveling to a hotter environment, allow time for your body to adjust to the new conditions—a practice that’s known as *acclimatization*. Ideally, acclimatization should occur over 10 to 14 days. It should include eight to 10 exposures lasting 30 to 45 minutes each once a day or once every other day. If you don’t have this long to acclimatize, limit the time you spend in practice and competition
- ❖ Drink plenty of fluids before participating in a sporting event—500 mL (about 1 pint) two hours before the event and another 200 to 300 mL (about 8 ounces) 20 minutes before the event
- ❖ Drink periodically (about every 20 minutes) during exercise; if exercise lasts longer than an hour, drink fluids containing glucose and electrolytes, such as sports drinks
- ❖ Weigh in before and after an athletic event and replace any weight loss with fluid
- ❖ Wear light-weight, light-colored clothing; change out of sweat-saturated garments into dry clothes
- ❖ Be aware of the warning signs of heat illness. If you, or a teammate, experience nausea, headache, dizziness, stumbling, or any change in mental status, such as confusion, stop exercise immediately! Seek a cool environment and drink cold fluids. Inform a parent or coach of your symptoms right away