

Preventing Heat Illness

Exertional heat illnesses are not limited to athletes. Anyone who works or plays in the heat is at risk for heat illness. Take precautions to make sure you are properly hydrated, acclimated to the heat, and take breaks out of the sun.

Heat Index is the temperature or degrees Fahrenheit (F) indicating how hot it feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature. Exposure to full sun can increase the heat index by 15 degrees.

Source: Arkansas Department of Health

How to prevent heat illness:

- Become acclimatized to the heat
- Stay hydrated
- Get plenty of rest
- Eat properly
- Avoid strenuous activity outdoors when the heat is too intense

An important step in avoiding heat illness is adjusting practice or game length and intensity to the environmental conditions. Temperature and humidity combine to create conditions that can produce heat illness and dehydration.

Take caution during the following conditions:

- 95 degrees – an air temperature of 95° Fahrenheit is high risk regardless of the humidity
- 85 degrees + 60% humidity – an air temperature of 85° Fahrenheit and humidity of 60% or above
- 75 degrees + 90% humidity – an air temperature of 75° Fahrenheit and humidity of 90% or above

Source: Kendrick Fincher Hydration for Life

Certain types of athletes might be at a higher risk for heat-related illness and should be monitored closely.

These types of players include:

- Younger athletes
- Those with a prior history of heat illness
- Overweight or obese players
- Players with a medical history of gastrointestinal, diabetic, kidney, or heart problems.

These athletes may require special attention by coaches and quick action if any symptom of heat illness is noticed.

Source: Kendrick Fincher Hydration for Life

A **Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)** device is a measurement tool that uses ambient temperature, relative humidity, wind, and solar radiation from the sun to get a measure that can be used to monitor environmental conditions during exercise. As environmental temperature and humidity increase, there is an increase in the heat stress that is placed on the

athlete. Establishing WBGT guidelines that dictate modifications in activity, such as increased rest time, hydration breaks, the amount of equipment worn, and the length of practice at given WBGT temperatures play a huge factor in helping to prevent exertional heat stroke.

Source: Korey Stringer Institute

If you must exercise outside in the summer, it is better to **exercise in the early morning or the late evening** in order to avoid the hottest temperatures of the day.

Clothing can be a factor in causing heat illness. **Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.**

Being sick a day or two before exercise can put your body in a weakened and dehydrated state. This increases the odds for heat stroke. If an athlete has had an illness, he or she should **refrain from practice or competition until a full recovery has been made.**

In states that have adopted the **heat acclimatization guidelines put forth by the Korey Stringer Institute**, there have been zero deaths from exertional heat stroke. Arkansas adopted those guidelines in June 2012. The state continues to work with the institute to improve policies as new information becomes available.

Source: Korey Stringer Institute

Arkansas Act 1214 of 2011 requires scholastic coaches to receive professional development in heat illness, concussion, and communicable diseases in athletics on a three year rotation.

Source: Arkansas Activities Association