

SPORTS DEHYDRATION SAFETY TIPS

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe from dehydration when playing sports.



To keep kids in top shape for sports, it's important for them to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Dehydration occurs when a body loses more water than it takes in (such as through sweating). When kids don't drink enough water while playing sports, they could be at risk for dehydration, heat exhaustion or even heatstroke.

Drink Enough Water!

Encourage athletes to drink the right amount of water. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends:

- 5 oz. for a 88-pound child every 20 minutes
- 9 oz. for a 132-pound adolescent every 20 minutes

Kids will know if they are drinking enough water if their urine is clear or the color of lemonade.

Bring a Water Bottle and Take Regular Breaks

- Make sure athletes have a water bottle for every practice and game.
- Make sure athletes drink fluids (water is the best option) 30 minutes before the activity begins and every 15-20 minutes during activity. Drinking water after play is equally important.
- Establish mandatory water breaks throughout practices and games—don't wait for a child to tell you he or she is thirsty. Encourage children to stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water before, during and after play.

Know the Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration

- The severity of dehydration can vary from mild to more life threatening if left unchecked. There are three levels of dehydration: heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- Symptoms can range from muscle cramping in the calves, back, arms or abdomen (heat cramps) to faintness or dizziness, nausea and rapid heartbeat (heat exhaustion) to collapse, emotional instability and very high body temperature (heatstroke).

Respond Appropriately to the Signs of Heat Illness

- If an athlete is dehydrated or suffering from heat exhaustion, call 911 if his or her condition doesn't improve or worsens. If you suspect heatstroke call 911 immediately and make every effort to cool the athlete.
- Move athlete to shade and cool the body with cold water. Have the athlete drink cool water, remove any equipment and excess clothing and lie down, raising his or her legs about 8-12 inches.
- Make sure the athlete gets checked out by a doctor or medical personnel and is cleared before returning to play.
- Treat heatstroke victims right away by immersing them in cold water before the ambulance arrives. If immersion is not an option, soak the child with cold water from a shower, hose or soaking towel.

While at play, children generate more heat than adults, but also sweat less, which makes them more susceptible to dehydration. It is estimated that more than 9,000 high school athletes are treated for heat illness each year in the United States.

