

Guidelines for Safe Sports Participation of Youth in Hot Weather from Livestrong.com

Overview

Teenagers and children who participate in [sports](#) are more likely than adults to experience dehydration and heat illness, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The risk for youth athletes increases when weather is hot and humid and activity is prolonged. Guidelines for safety during hot weather sports stress prevention, which includes understanding how young people adapt physiologically to heat, humidity and loss of body fluids.

Hot Weather and Youth Athletes

Sports participation in hot and humid weather can cause life-threatening heat illnesses, such as heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat stroke. Youth are usually safe participating in sports activities in dry, warm weather. Hot weather with high humidity can cause problems for young athletes because they require more time to adjust to heat than adults. Teenagers sweat less than adults and they are likely to generate more heat during physical activities.

Heat Exhaustion

The symptoms of heat exhaustion, which is a form a shock, include heavy sweating, [muscle cramps](#) and spasms, headache, nausea, weakness, fatigue, dizziness and moist, pale skin that feels cool. A youth athlete who shows symptoms of heat illness should stop all activity, re-hydrate and rest in a shaded area where she is helped to stretch and massage her muscles. If the youth athlete is vomiting or unconscious, call for emergency services.

Heat Stroke

Athletes suffering heat stroke, which is brought on by another medical condition, appear flushed with dry, hot skin. Although the body core temperature is high, the athlete may feel chilly. He may hyperventilate and seem confused, dizzy or delirious. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention. Adults should try to lower the athlete's body temperature and keep him awake until help arrives.

Heat-Acclimatization

Heat acclimatization, which is a gradual process that allows the body to become accustomed to physical activity in heat and humidity, can help prevent heat illness, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Acclimatization requires a one-to-two week period during which athletes start with light practice and gradually increase activity length and intensity. The National Athletic Trainers' Association provides detailed preseason heat-acclimatization guidelines for youth sports.

Hydration

Youth athletes should replace fluids before, during and after [exercise](#). Athletes should hydrate at least two days before games by drinking at least eight glasses of water a day for two days. While plain water is sufficient to replace fluids, athletes might drink more if the fluids are flavored and contain electrolytes and glucose.

Teenage athletes should drink 10 to 15 ounces of cool water before exercise and about 8 to 10 ounces every 20 to 30 minutes during exercise. Sports drinks are necessary only when activities are prolonged, such as marathons, although some athletes drink them after games to replenish muscles. Fruit juices and soft drinks can interfere with fluid absorption and cause upset stomach.

Other Guidelines

Lightweight, absorbent clothing helps sweat to evaporate. Athletes' clothing should be light-colored, loose-fitting and expose as much skin as possible. Allow youth athletes to replace sweat-soaked clothing with dry clothing. Wet towels kept in a cooler can be used as neck wraps to lower body temperature. Youth athletes should wear, and replace as needed, sunscreen. During extreme heat, safety guidelines recommend holding practices and games in the mornings and late afternoons when there is less heat

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