

Heat-Related Illness Prevention in Student-Athletes

In order to participate in any extracurricular physical activity, each student-athlete and the student-athlete's parent or guardian shall review, on an annual basis, information provided by the local school division on conditions related to heat-illness. After reviewing the materials, each student-athlete and the student-athlete's parent or guardian shall sign a statement acknowledging receipt of such information, in a manner approved by the Board of Education.

CONDITIONS

“Heat-related illness” is a general term encompassing four specific conditions: (1) heat stroke (a medical emergency); (2) heat exhaustion; (3) heat syncope (fainting); and (4) heat cramps. The prevention of heat-related illness includes proper acclimatization for exercise in hot and humid environments and maintaining appropriate hydration levels.

“Heat acclimatization” involves gradual increases in the duration and intensity of physical activity in hot and humid environments over a 7-14 days period. Appropriate hydration begins prior to engaging in exercise, followed by minimizing fluid loss during activity and replacing fluid during and after activity.

Additionally, local monitoring of ambient temperature and humidity levels, combined with policies that limit practice duration, activity intensity, and the wearing of protective equipment during periods of high temperature and humidity levels, is critical to preventing heat-related illness and promoting student-athlete health and safety.

STUDENT-ATHLETES

Student-athletes displaying the following signs and symptoms may be experiencing heat stroke and heat exhaustion, the two most concerning forms of heat-related illness, and should be removed from play immediately:

- Irrational behavior, irritability, or emotional instability
- Altered consciousness
- Excessive fatigue
- Disorientation
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Confusion
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Collapse
- Staggering or sluggish feeling

COACHES, ATHLETIC TRAINERS, AND OTHER STAFF

Coaches, athletic trainers, and other staff supervising the activity should be monitoring student-athletes for any signs or symptoms of heat-related illness. Coaches, athletic trainers and other staff should be prepared to immediately remove from activity any student-athlete reporting or displaying any signs or symptoms of heat-related illness and to rapidly cool the student-athlete with whole-body by (based on immediate availability):

- Cold-water immersion;
- Dousing the student-athlete with cold water (cold shower);
- Rotating ice towels and/or ice bags over as much of the body of the student-athlete as possible; and/or
- Using fans to cool the student-athlete

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each school division shall develop and biennially update policies and procedures regarding prevention, recognition, and management of student-athletes who may be experiencing heat-related illness.

School staff supervising athletic activities in hot and humid environments should be monitoring student-athletes for any signs or symptoms of heat-related illness and should be prepared to immediately cool a student-athlete suspected of heat exhaustion or heat stroke with whole-body cold-water immersion, cold water dousing (cold shower), ice towels and/or ice bags, and/or the use of fans.

A student-athlete reporting signs or symptoms associated with a heat-related illness to a coach, athletic trainer, or team physician in a practice or game shall be removed from the activity at that time. A student-athlete who has been removed from play, evaluated, and suspected to be at risk of or experiencing heat stroke shall not return to play that same day.

RECOGNITION

Each school division will ensure school staff have training in the recognition of the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses (*heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat syncope, heat cramps, differentiating heat cramps and exertional sickling*).

Heat-related illnesses are not part of a continuum in the sense that an individual experiencing heat exhaustion who continues to exercise will in turn develop heat stroke. While some of the signs and symptoms are similar, these are unique conditions. That said, experiencing heat cramps or syncope one day may predispose an individual to more significant heat-related illnesses in the future.

PREVENTION

Each school division will ensure that school staff have training of the risk factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) associated with and the prevention of heat-related illnesses for heat exhaustion and heat stroke, monitoring ambient temperature and humidity, and prevention through heat acclimatization and hydration. Student-athletes should strive to begin exercise properly hydrated while minimizing fluid loss during activity, followed by fluid replacement during and after activity. Additional guidance on maintaining appropriate hydration levels is available in the Resources section of this document.

MANAGEMENT

Each school division will ensure each school has staff trained in the management of heat-related illnesses, including the development of Emergency Action Plans.

RESOURCES

<https://www.vhsl.org/sports-medicine/heat-hydration/>
<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/heat-illness-prevention-2>
<https://ksi.uconn.edu/prevention/heat-acclimatization/>
<https://ksi.uconn.edu/prevention/hydration/>

*See next page for Parent/Student-Athlete Acknowledgement and signature form.

Parent/Student Athlete Acknowledgement

Pursuant to Virginia Acts of Assembly 2022, c. 428, the Department of Education (Department) is directed to develop and distribute to school divisions guidelines on policies to inform and educate coaches, student-athletes, and student-athletes' parents or guardians on the nature and risk of heat-related illness.

An Act to direct the Department of Education, in conjunction with stakeholders, to develop guidelines on policies to inform and educate coaches and student athletes and their parents or guardians on heat-related illness.

I have reviewed the YCSD Heat-Related Illness Prevention In Student-Athletes Information

Student-Athlete Signature:

Date

Print Name:

Parent/ Guardian Signature:

Date

Print Name: