**10 Ways to Help Athletes Stay Safe in Intense Heat**

1. **ALLOW FOR ACCLIMATION –** While it can take 10-14 days for an athlete’s body to adapt to the heat, acclimation should start two weeks before team practices begin. An athlete should start with 15-20 minutes of continuous exercise outside in the heat, and add 5-10 minutes each day.1
2. **ADOPT REHYDRATION STRATEGY -** Hydration helps reduce an athlete’s risk of heat illness and can help the athlete maintain a high level of performance. Proactive steps athletes can take to avoid dehydration include:

	* Weigh in and out before and after activity
	* Drink enough fluid to minimize weight loss - for each pound (16 oz.) that is lost, he or she may need to consume 20 ounces after athletic activity to fully rehydrate.
	* Check urine. If it’s like pale lemonade, that’s a sign of good hydration.

1. **DRINK UP –** Athletes should drink enough fluid to prevent dehydration without over-drinking. Flavored, cold, lightly salted sports drinks like Gatorade are important because sodium helps maintain the physiological desire to drink and helps retain the fluid consumed.
2. **BUDDY UP AND KNOW THE SIGNS –** Encourage athletes to buddy up with a teammate and watch out for each other when it’s hot and humid. They should know the signs and symptoms of heat illness which can include:
	* Nausea
	* Headache
	* Weakness
	* Fainting
	* Poor concentration
	* Personality change
	* Flushed skin
	* Light headedness
	* Loss of muscle coordination
	* Fatigue
	* Vomiting

1. **COOL THE BODY** – If experiencing heat illness, an athlete should take steps to cool the body, including lying in a cool place with legs elevated, applying cool, wet towels to the body and drinking cool fluids.
2. **BE FLEXIBLE -** An important step in avoiding heat illness is adjusting practice or game length and intensity to the environmental conditions. If possible, athletes should avoid strenuous and high intensity activities during the warmest time of day (10 am – 4 pm).
3. **DRESS FOR THE WEATHER –** Keeping cool in hot weather means being mindful of appropriate clothing and equipment that can help evaporate heat from the body:
	* Wear light-colored clothing
	* Wear t-shirts and shorts, not pads
	* Remove helmets when not active
	* Avoid wearing excess clothing
	* Change sweat–soaked clothing frequently

1. **FIND TIME FOR RECOVERY –** Rest and recovery are an essential part of avoiding heat illness. Athletes should work in times for breaks when active throughout the day, attempt to get six to eight hours of sleep a night and sleep in a cool environment, if possible.
2. **MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET –** Athletes need to think about fueling before, during and after physical activity. He or she should be fully hydrated with fluids and fueled with foods that contain electrolytes to maintain fluid levels. Fluids lost through sweat and breathing should be replaced by fluid consumption including during workouts, practices and games (physical activity).
3. **HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN -** Have a plan to contact medical professionals in an emergency. Also keep a “cool pool” or ice bath nearby so medical personnel can choose to immerse athletes suffering from heat stroke if necessary.