

Clinton Central Athletic Department

Preventing Heat-Related Illnesses

Heat illnesses are among the most common, but easily prevented, problems that can arise when athletes participate in hot & humid conditions. Managing the heat requires collaboration among athletes, coaches, parents and the Witham Health Services medical staff. Heat illnesses can range from dehydration and cramping to external heat stroke, a life-threatening emergency.

The following information is designed to help athletes and parents understand the risks associated with exercising in hot/humid conditions and what can be done to prevent heat illness.

Types of Heat Illness

- Heat Cramps: These are painful cramps which often affect the legs, arms or abdomen.

These often occur during the preseason or early season when the body is not as well conditioning. Cramps have been linked to poor hydration and lack of dietary sodium.

- Heat Exhaustion: This is the most common heat-related illness. It is characterized by the inability to continue exercising in hot/humid conditions. In this condition, the heart has difficulty delivering blood to working organs and muscles. Signs and symptoms include fatigue, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, weakness headache and elevated body temperature.

- Heat Stroke: This is a true medical emergency! Signs and symptoms include high body core temperature (>104), altered consciousness, collapse and irrational behavior.

Risk factors for Heat Illness

- Heat and Humidity
- Extreme Physical Exertion
- Inadequate Hydration
- Inadequate Acclimatization
- Low Fitness level
- Excessive clothing and/or equipment
- Fever
- Lack of sleep
- Prior history of heat illness

Preventing Heat Illness

- **Acclimatize** – It takes 10-14 days for an athlete's body to adapt to the heat. Athlete's should gradually increase intensity and duration of training in hot/humid conditions.

Proper acclimatization allows for better physiologic function and increased heat tolerance.

- **Hydrate** – Athlete's that are properly hydrated can work hard over longer periods of time with less stress on their body. Your child should come to practice or games well hydrated.