This Risk Alert contains valuable information. Please share it with your Wright Specialty Clients and any other interested educational institutions.



Exertional heat stroke is one of the three leading causes of sudden death in sports. The period between 2005 - 2009 had more heat stroke deaths than any other five year period in the prior 35 years. There were 18 deaths from 2005 to 2009. From 2010 to 2014 (still being tracked) there are now an estimated 20 to 22 deaths. Male high school athletes are at highest risk of experiencing heat-related illnesses that require emergency room treatment. [1] Tragically, nearly three high school football players die of heat-related illnesses each year. Besides late summer or early fall football, cross country, soccer and field hockey practices are conducted in hot and humid weather in many parts of the United States. Most heat-related injuries are associated with football, usually as a result of the type of equipment and uniforms used.

Many independent school athletics associations provide safety information and material addressing heat stress and athletic participation. The school physician and athletic trainer are sources of information as well. In addition, the National Federation of State High School Associations has material on this topic. This material can be accessed at the Association's web site at: http://www.nfhs.org. Scroll down to the bottom and select Sports Medicine.

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) provides safety tips for athletes who play or practice when there are high temperatures. They include the following recommendations:

- Unrestricted access to water is critical. Have water and sports drinks on hand.
- Keep beverages cold.
- Replacement of lost fluids is the key safeguard to prevent heat-related incidents. Hydrate before, during and after activity. An individual can lose up to a half-gallon in fluids during outdoor play in extreme temperatures.
- Remove unnecessary equipment such as helmets and padding when conditions become extreme.
- Use light colored, lightweight clothing that protects against the sun.
- If athletes are not acclimatized to the weather, encourage a gradual adjustment to hot weather. During the first week or so, hold shorter practices with lighter equipment so players can acclimate to the heat.
- Follow a strict work-to-rest ratio, such as 10-minute breaks after 40 minutes of exercise.

The NATA's handout - Beat the Heat can be accessed at: <u>http://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/Hydration\_Heat\_IIIness\_Handout.pdf</u>

Additionally, having current medical forms and up-to-date health histories for student-athletes will help identify students with medical conditions that may put them at greater risk for heat-related illness. Overweight or obese football players are the most at risk and linesmen are the most vulnerable. Your emergency management plan should include procedures to deal with heat exhaustion, heat stroke and other related illnesses.

<sup>[1]</sup> National Athletic Trainers Association -

Executive Summary of National Athletic Trainers Association Position Statement on Exertional Heat Illnesses.

## **Resources:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress

Gatorade Sports Science Institute. <u>www.gssiweb.com</u>

National Athletic Trainers Association. www.nata.org

UGA Today. *Deaths Triple Among Football Players, Morning Temperatures Thought to Play a Role.* Professor Andrew Grundstein, February 2012.

## http://www.wrightspecialty.com

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