

CYC St. Charles District

GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING HEAT-RELATED PROBLEMS DURING PRACTICE AND CONTESTS- DRAFT DOCUMENT

I. The National Weather Bureau (or similar local weather, Weather Channel etc...) on its radio station, broadcasts an hourly heat index reading. It is strongly recommended that all parishes use these services to make judgments about athletic contests. Basically, precautionary measures should be taken when the heat index is between 95 and 105 degrees. Over 105 degree heat index indicates a significant danger level. While MSHSAA uses the aforementioned heat levels, the CYC St. Charles District will use lower heat index numbers as trigger points in our policy.

A. The following procedures should be followed for athletic contests scheduled during the day in hot weather:

1. The National Weather Service (or similar local weather, Weather Channel etc...) should be checked the day before a game, as well as the morning of any scheduled daytime event.
2. If heat index is stated between 95 and 100 degrees, plans should be implemented to alter game conditions. This may include altering game times, altering warm up procedures (baseball/softball), shortening the game duration (I.e. less innings or less time per quarter/half. All alterations will be addressed before the start of the contest and discussed/agreed upon by both coaches and officials. Note: only the District can alter/change game times.
3. If heat index is stated over 100 degrees, plans to postpone or reschedule athletic contest shall be implemented.

B. The following procedures should be followed for athletic contests scheduled during the evening in hot weather:

1. The National Weather Service (or similar local weather, Weather Channel etc...), should be checked three (3) hours before schedule contest.
2. If a heat index between 95 and 100 degrees is stated, plans should be implemented to alter game conditions that day. This may include altering game times, altering warm up procedures (baseball/softball), shortening the game duration (I.e. less innings or less time per quarter/half. All alterations will be addressed before the start of the contest and discussed/agreed upon by both coaches and officials. Note: only the District can alter/change game times.
3. If a heat index over 100 degrees is stated, plans to postpone or reschedule athletic contest should be implemented.

C. The following procedures should be considered for practice sessions when a dangerous heat index level is indicated:

1. Possible cancellation of all practice.
2. Shorter practice time.
3. Early morning or late evening practice.
4. Move outside practice sessions indoors if possible.

Note: This policy applies to CYC St. Charles District league games and does not extend to parish level events or tournaments not coordinated by the CYC St. Charles District.

The following information is provided as suggestions for coaches and parents.

1. It must be instilled in the players by the coaches and parents that water and salt replenishment is a continual process and not a "stop-gap maneuver." Players should be encouraged during hot weather to drink adequate quantities of fluid throughout the day at home, as well as at practice sessions. During practice sessions, water should be available to them at all times. Obviously, the hotter, more humid weather indicates more frequent water breaks. This can be scheduled either up to every ten (10) to fifteen (15) minutes during extremes or if applicable, free water intake should be allowed during the entire practice session.
2. It is recommended that practice sessions be scheduled as much as possible during the morning hours and evening hours. For example, 8 o'clock practice in the morning and 6:00 p.m. or later.
3. Cooling by evaporation is proportional to the area of skin exposed. In extremely hot and humid weather reduce the amount of clothing covering the body as much as possible. NEVER USE RUBBERIZED CLOTHING.
4. Parents and coaches should check and be sure players are drinking the water. Younger children may not realize the importance of drinking fluids. Replacement by thirst alone is inadequate.
5. Parents and coaches should observe athletes carefully for signs of trouble. Some trouble signs are nausea, incoherence, fatigue, weakness, vomiting, cramps, weak rapid pulse, visual disturbance and unsteadiness.
6. Parents and coaches should know what to do in case of such an emergency. Be familiar with immediate first aid practice and prearranged procedures for obtaining medical care, including ambulance service.
7. Parents and coaches should provide rest periods of at least two hours between same-day contests in warm to hot weather. This may come into play during tournaments or with a child playing in more than one league.
8. Parents should limit participation of children who have had a recent illness or have other risk factors that would reduce exercise-heat tolerance.
9. Parents and coaches should educate children about preparing for the heat to improve safety and reduce the risk for heat illness.
10. Coaches should allow children to gradually adapt to physical activity in the heat.

Summer Baseball, Softball, and early fall soccer games (both league and tournament) and practices are conducted in very hot and humid weather. Due to equipment and uniform needed in football, most of the heat problems have been associated with football however this does not preclude baseball, softball and soccer players from experiencing heat related illnesses. Under such conditions the athlete is subject to:

Heat Cramps -- Painful cramps involving abdominal muscles and extremities caused by intense, prolonged exercise in the heat and depletion of salt and water due to profuse sweating.

Heat Syncope -- Weakness, fatigue and fainting due to loss of salt and water in sweat and exercise in the heat. Predisposes to heat stroke.

Heat Exhaustion (Water Depletion) -- Excessive weight loss, reduced sweating, elevated skin and core body temperature, excessive thirst, weakness, headache, and sometimes unconsciousness.

Heat Exhaustion (Salt Depletion) -- Exhaustion, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, and dizziness due to profuse sweating and inadequate replacement of body salts.

Heat Stroke -- An acute medical emergency related to thermoregulatory failure. Associated with nausea, seizures, disorientation, and possible unconsciousness or coma. It may occur suddenly without being preceded by any other

clinical signs. The individual is usually unconscious with a high body temperature and a hot dry skin (heat stroke victims, contrary to popular belief, may sweat profusely).

Heat Stroke: THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY-DELAY COULD BE FATAL. Immediately cool body while waiting transfer to a hospital. Remove clothing and place ice bags on the neck, in the axilla (armpit), and on the groin areas. Fan athlete and spray with cold water to enhance evaporation.

Heat Exhaustion: OBTAIN MEDICAL CARE AT ONCE. Cool body as you would for heat stroke while waiting for transfer to a hospital. Give fluids if athlete is able to swallow and is conscious.

It is believed that the above mentioned heat stress problems can be controlled provided certain precautions are taken. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine, heat related illnesses are all preventable. (Sports Medicine: Health Care for Young Athletes, American Academy of Pediatrics, July 2000).

Additionally, new guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) show that heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other heat-related illnesses are preventable in young athletes much in the same way they are in adults.

Previous research had suggested that children are less effective than adults at regulating body temperature and are at higher risk of heat-related illness. But new research shows that children and adults of comparable fitness levels have similar responses to heat exertion when they are well hydrated.

“Most healthy children and athletes can safely participate in outdoor sports and activities in a wide range of warm to hot weather, but adults sometimes create situations that are potentially dangerous,” researcher Stephen G. Rice, MD, former member of the executive committee of the AAP Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness, says in a news release. “Heat illness is entirely preventable if coaches and other adults take some precautions to protect the young athletes.”

The new guidelines call for parents and other adults in charge of running practices and games on hot, humid days to exercise common sense to keep kids safe against heat-related illness.

“While coaches should make on-the-field decisions to improve safety for a team or event as a whole, individual participants may require more or less concern based on their health status and conditioning,” researcher Michael F. Bergeron, PhD, director of the National Institute for Athletic Health & Performance at Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls, S.D., says in a news release.

For example, a physically fit, well-hydrated, 12-year-old soccer player who is used to the heat would typically be fine playing on a 95-degree day. But an overweight football player recovering from an illness and running wind sprints at the end of a long day of workouts on the first day of preseason football would be at higher risk even if its only 85 degrees.

Researchers say the biggest change in the guidelines is the recognition that children can tolerate and adapt to exercising in the heat as well as adults of similar fitness levels as long as they are adequately hydrated.

Sources: Web MD Aug. 8, 2011 - <http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/news/20110808/new-advice-for-keeping-young-athletes-safe-in-heat>

MSHSAA -

http://www.mshsaa.org/Media/Default_News_Media%20Information_content.aspx?viewmode=story&storyid=2