STAY SAFE IN HEAT

Hot summer conditions raise student athletes' risk of heat illness. These conditions vary in severity, from common, less severe heat cramps and heat exhaustion to potentially deadly heat stroke. Exertional heat stroke can be fatal, but prompt recognition and appropriate treatment can prevent death.

DEHYDRATION AND HEAT ILLNESS

At a core temperature of 105 degrees or above, cell damage can develop in as little as 30 minutes.

Replace fluids according to SWEAT LOST.

By August 2022, 14 states required every best-practice heat acclimatization standard for high school athletics.

Exertional heat stroke ranks among the three leading killers of athletes and soldiers in training.

- Between 2015 and 2019, 17 athletic heat stroke deaths were reported.
- Adapting to exercise in the heat takes seven to 14 days.
- Losing 3% to 4% of body mass through dehydration can lower muscle strength by about 2%.

SAFETY ADVICE

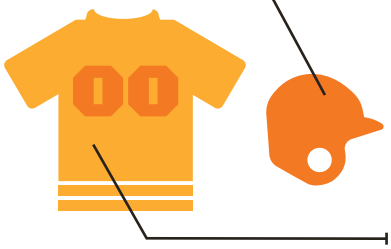


Keep sports drinks available for exercise sessions over one hour.

Serve drinks cold: people consume 50% more of cold drinks than warm ones.

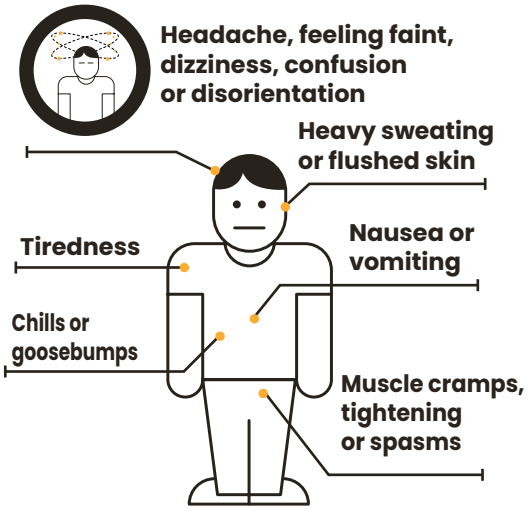
Drink before, during and after activity.

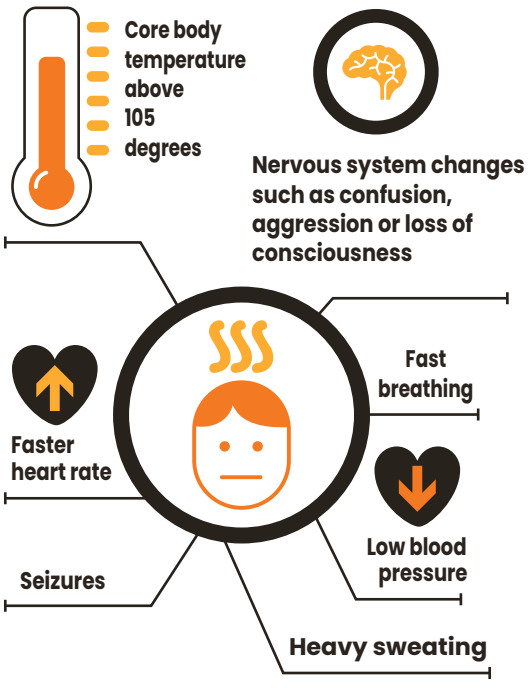
When conditions become extreme, remove extra equipment, including helmets and protective padding.



Athletes should wear lightweight, light-colored clothing that shields them from the sun.

Recognize exertional HEAT ILLNESS





- In week one, limit practice to one session a day, lasting no more than 120 minutes.
- Add equipment gradually during the first week, using this schedule:
  - Days 1-2: Wear only a helmet or headgear
  - Days 3-5: Add shoulder pads to the helmet
  - Day 6: Start wearing full equipment
- Match the work-to-rest ratio to environmental conditions.
- Measure local heat stress with wet-bulb globe temperature, which considers air temperature, relative humidity, wind and solar radiation.
- For exertional heat stroke, cool the person first, then transport them.
- Before every practice and game, prepare shade, cooling stations and large cold tubs in case cold-water immersion is needed to treat exertional heat stroke.
- Best practice is to use a rectal thermometer to measure core temperature and identify exertional heat stroke. A trained medical professional, such as an athletic trainer, should perform this assessment.

Infographic from the National Athletic Trainers' Association (revised 2025)

Sources: Korey Stringer Institute, American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, NATA, National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research, University of North Carolina