Practice Modifications

- Ready supply of water and sports drinks (non-caffeinated).
- Increase frequency and number of water breaks.
- Fruits with high water content (oranges, watermelons) make excellent snacks.
- Limit length and intensity of practices during the hours of 10am to 5pm and times of high heat and humidity.
- Provide a shaded area for rest periods.
- Limit use of dark colored clothing and bulky equipment – eliminate pads and helmets when possible.

Background Information

The body produces sweat which cools the body as it evaporates. High humidity, tight clothing, and bulky equipment decreases the body’s ability to cool itself by evaporation. Dehydration occurs when athletes do not drink enough fluids to replace what is normally lost throughout the day in sweat and urine. Dehydration is known to decrease athletic performance, even in elite athletes.

Heat exhaustion is the most common form of heat illness and is a more severe form of dehydration. Exertional heat stroke is a medical emergency and may lead to permanent brain damage. It develops when heat production is greater than heat loss through evaporation of sweat.

Treatment

- Remove excess equipment and clothing.
- Provide fluids, shade, and rest.

When to Seek Professional Help

If athlete shows signs of exertional heat stroke call 9-1-1, follow the above steps and apply ice-packs to under-arms and groin.

- Once athlete is released from medical care, no strenuous exercise for 7 days.

Prevention

- Encourage athletes to drink plenty of fluids before and after all forms of exercise.
- Adequate hydration produces a light yellow or straw colored urine, dehydration produces a dark urine.

Dehydration, Heat Exhaustion, and Exertional Heat Stroke

Know the Signs!

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