



AVOIDING HEAT ILLNESS



**PEACHTREE
ORTHOPAEDIC CLINIC**

Heat Illness

Everyone should be aware of the risks, symptoms and prevention methods related to heat illness. Being aware of the signs and symptoms can greatly reduce the risks and even save a life. Dehydration plays a major role in the progression of heat illness, especially when a person is subjected to high temperatures for extended periods of time without the replenishment of fluids. Symptoms can be noticeable after 2% of the body's normal water content is depleted. Dehydration can cause electrolyte imbalance, which can lead to abnormal functioning of the heart, the kidneys and the nervous system.

When the heat index exceeds 90 degrees there should be an unlimited amount of fluids available to athletes. Athletes should not start drinking when they feel thirsty; by the time thirst develops they are already a little dehydrated. Drink enough water or sports drinks throughout the day and during practice to keep from getting thirsty. Athletes should avoid drinking fruit juices, carbonated drinks and drinks containing caffeine because these can lead to further dehydration.

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps can occur while active in high temperatures and are commonly related to excessive water and electrolyte loss. Electrolytes are essential for normal muscle function. Replenish some electrolyte loss by eating bananas to add potassium, adding a little salt to your food, eating or drinking dairy products to replenish calcium, and drinking plenty of water and sports drinks. If heat cramps do occur, drink water or a sports drink and stretch and ice massage the muscle.

Heat Exhaustion

The onset of heat exhaustion usually occurs because the athlete neglected to replenish fluids lost through sweating. Athletes who become a victim of heat exhaustion will often collapse and will be profusely sweating with pale skin and an elevated body temperature of around 102 degrees.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a life threatening emergency. Immediate medical attention should be given to athletes who fall victim to heat stroke. These athletes tend to suddenly collapse and usually lose consciousness. Their skin will be flushed and typically dry, since sweating has stopped. The athlete will have shallow breathing with a strong rapid pulse. The core body temperature will be above 104 degrees. Heat stroke can occur suddenly and without warning. If heat stroke is suspected, move the victim to a cool environment, pack the athletes armpits, groin, abdomen and neck with ice and call 911.

Stay Hydrated

Be sure to stay well hydrated. Athletes should drink approximately 2 to 3 cups of water before a workout, 3 to 4 cups during a workout and 2 cups for every pound of weight lost after the workout to maintain hydration levels and avoid heat illness.

For more information about the sports medicine specialists at Peachtree Orthopaedic Clinic, call **404-355-0743** or visit www.pocatlanta.com.

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