

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Heat Acclimatization By Derek Neubauer

Summer time brings with it the hazards of heat related illness in sports. Players who participate in hot conditions are susceptible to heat illness. Heat illness comes in three stages, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Heat Cramps

Involuntary muscle cramps can be very painful, they occur mainly in the lower body. They are caused by dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. Icing or massaging can help relieve the pain, but prevention with a proper hydration plan is the best strategy.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion is the overload of the body's thermoregulatory system that results in extreme sweating, heavy breathing, fatigue, and rapid pulse. Heat cramps can be a symptom along with nausea, dizziness, and the appearance of distress. Players should not continue and be placed in a cool shaded area, given water, and ice applied to the neck, back and stomach. At this stage the body's thermoregulatory system is still working but is unable to keep up with the physical demand.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs after heat exhaustion. Essentially, it is the shutting down of the thermoregulatory system. The body can no longer cool itself and will die if formal treatment is not started. This is a situation that requires immediate emergency medical support. Treatment includes cooling procedures, IV fluids, electrolytes and monitoring vital signs. The player may no longer be

sweating, have loss of balance, memory and consciousness.

PIAA Acclimatization Program

Starting in 2013 the PIAA Board of Directors decided to require heat acclimation training for all football teams in the state. Football is the target of the program because of the amount of equipment that is worn. Each school sponsored high school football team is required to institute the program. Each school has two options when dealing with the heat acclimatization program. Option one is to use three consecutive days prior to the start of the first starting day (8/17/15). Option two is to use the first three days of practice on the first starting day (8/17/15).

- A heat acclimation plan should be established and reviewed/approved by the High School Principal.
- Practices are limited to 3 hours in length and not more than 5 hours per day.
- Must have 2 hours of rest between sessions (recovery period).
- If performing option one then no contact is allowed until after the starting day.
- If performing option two then full gear is allowed on third day.

The entire program can be found at <http://www.piaa.org/resources/handbook/default.aspx> under section III.

Although no such program is required for any other PIAA sports at this time, all other sports that start in the late summer are encouraged to have heat acclimatization practice sessions and hydration plans.

**The PIAA may revise the current Acclimatization Plan for the 2015 season, by requiring 5 days instead of the 3 days listed above. Stay tuned to RISK MANAGER for updates.*

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.