



U.S. Soccer Federation

Youth Soccer Heat Stress Guidelines

Quick Tips for Parents, Coaches and Young Athletes

Youth soccer participation is at an all-time high, with nearly 14 million young athletes under the age of 18 playing soccer at elite and recreational levels in the United States. To alert parents, coaches and young athletes about the dangers of dehydration and help prevent heat illness among young athletes, the U.S. Soccer Federation offers the following recommendations to parents, coaches and young soccer players.

It is important these groups follow these recommendations in light of recent heat illness incidents across a variety of sports and because children are more susceptible to heat illness than adults when active in hot, humid conditions.

G.O.A.L.

To help make the recommendations easy to remember, the U.S. Soccer Federation has developed the acronym G.O.A.L., which stands for:

- ✓ **Get acclimated** – active kids’ need time to gradually adapt to hotter temperatures.
- ✓ **On a schedule, drink up** – thirst isn’t an accurate indicator of fluid needs. Young athletes should be encouraged to drink on a schedule or at regular intervals before they become thirsty.
- ✓ **Always bring a Gatorade** – especially during games and practices in the heat, replacing electrolytes and providing energy is crucial to keeping kids safe.
- ✓ **Learn the warning signs of dehydration and heat illness** – if someone becomes fatigued, dizzy, nauseous or has a headache during exercise in the heat, have them stop, rest and drink fluids. Seek medical attention if symptoms persist.

YOUTH FLUID GUIDELINES

Before Activity

- ✓ Young players should be well hydrated.
 - You can ensure a young athlete is well hydrated by checking their urine color: light-colored urine indicates athletes are well hydrated, whereas dark yellow urine is an indication of dehydration.

During Activity

- ✓ Drink early – even slight dehydration can compromise performance and increase the risk for heat-related illnesses.
- ✓ Young players should consume 5 to 9 ounces (5 ounces for a player weighing less than 90 lbs, 9 ounces for a player weighing more than 90 lbs) of fluid every 20 minutes while active.
- ✓ Sports drinks like Gatorade are preferred to water because research shows a young athlete will drink 90% more and stay better hydrated.

After Activity

- ✓ Regardless of thirst, drink every 20 minutes for one hour every 20 minutes after activity.

Fluids to Avoid During Practice or Games

- ✓ Fruit juices have a high sugar content, which can slow fluid absorption and cause upset stomach.
- ✓ Carbonated beverages, such as soft drinks, can reduce voluntary drinking due to stomach fullness and throat burn when gulping.
- ✓ Caffeinated beverages have a mild diuretic effect and therefore could promote dehydration by increasing urine production.
- ✓ Energy drinks should be avoided because many contain caffeine and have a high carbohydrate concentration, which slows fluid absorption.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCCER SAFETY IN THE HEAT

Acclimation is the Key

Help young players adjust to high temperatures and humidity by taking steps to acclimate them to the heat. Young athletes should have at least 8 to 10 short exposures to the hotter conditions (at 30 to 35 minutes each) to acclimate sufficiently.

Avoid Unusually Hot Temperatures

If confronted with extreme temperature and humidity conditions, it's important to hold practices and games at cooler times in the day such as morning or dusk.

Make Fluids Part of the Game Plan

Before, during and after practices and game, be sure young athletes consume adequate amounts of fluid. Young athletes can make sure they are properly hydrated by checking the color of their urine: lighter urine indicates children are better hydrated; dark, orange urine is a sign of dehydration. Research shows a 6% carbohydrate sports drink, like Gatorade, can be absorbed as rapidly as water and can provide energy to help delay fatigue and improve performance.

Clothes Should be Cool

Children should wear clothing that is light-colored, lightweight and loose-fitting to keep kids cool.

Use the Shade

Parents and coaches should encourage young players to take breaks in shaded areas whenever possible especially during tournaments, multi-game and multi-practice days.

Know the Warning Signs of Dehydration

Dehydration during activity is a common problem and can place young athletes at risk for serious heat-related illness, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. That's why it's important to know the warning signs:

- Thirst
- Dry lips and tongue
- Irritability
- Lack of energy
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Muscle Cramping
- Red, flushed face
- Dark, yellow urine

If a young player becomes disoriented or unconscious, seek medical attention immediately.

Be Prepared for an Emergency

Always have a phone available and be familiar with emergency numbers. Keep ice and ice towels on hand in case of heat-related emergencies.