

Hydration strategies for spring competition

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As warm weather approaches, football players and coaches are starting to pull out the helmets, shoulder pads, blocking shields and lesson plans for spring workouts.

One key to a good football practice is proper hydration.

Throughout training including before, during and after players and coaches both must focus on maintaining adequate hydration levels. Drinking plenty of fluids and staying well-hydrated benefits onfield performance while reducing the risk of heat stress or illness.

Hot and humid environments present greater chances for players to have fluid, energy and electrolyte deficits, but staying hydrated remains crucial even during mild early spring weather.

Ewing (N.J.) High School athletic trainer and USA Football Football and Wellness Committee member Dave Csillan provides some hydration tips and rules all football players and coaches should consider before lining up.

The chair of the Athletic Trainers Society of New Jersey Secondary School Committee, Csillan received a bachelor's degree in physical education from Trenton State College and a master's degree in athletic training from Old Dominion University. He is a member of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) Liaison to USA Football.

How much should you drink before and after activity? Drink 12 fluid ounces 30 minutes before activity begins. After activity, drink every 20 minutes during the first hour to make up for fluid loss.

What should you drink? Cold water is the best fluid to drink during activity and allows for fast absorption. It's a myth that cold water gives stomach cramps. Sports drinks work well after activity to help replenish lost electrolytes.

How much should you drink during exercise? Children under 90 pounds should drink 5 ounces every 20 minutes, and children more than 90 pounds should drink 9 ounces every 20 minutes.

Easy tip: A child's gulp equals half an ounce of fluid. Therefore, a child 90 pounds or less should drink at least 10 gulps every 20 minutes.

What is the thirst response? Don't allow thirst to be your guide to drinking. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated.

What color should your urine be? Your urine should look like lemonade and not apple juice. Urine color can be a non-scientific indicator that the body is becoming, or already is, dehydrated.

Drinking liquids is a necessity. Players and coaches should keep water and sports beverages available during drills and training sequences.

Dehydration signs and symptoms include: feeling fatigued, lack of energy, muscle cramps, headaches, dizziness and thirst.

Coaches should be mindful of keeping their players' hydration in balance.

The best preparation for workouts is coming into practice well-hydrated. Football players need to monitor sweat loss and increase fluid intake as their exercise level increases. Many teams mandate players weighing themselves before and after practice to see how much water weight was lost.

Heat illness and dehydration are not a 100 degrees Fahrenheit issue. Heat illness has been known to occur in temperatures of 82 degrees Fahrenheit, Csillan said. When the right combination of air temperature, relative humidity and exercise intensity are present, so is the risk of dehydration and heat illness.

Altering practices to the training environment, allowing for a gradual increase in exercise intensity and providing proper fluid intake makes dehydration and heat illness 100 percent preventable.

- See more at: [HERE](#)