

Heat Exposure

As Special Olympics practices, competitions, and activities often are conducted outdoors, we would like to provide some common sense safety procedures to help keep everyone safe and cool!

Following the simple risk management techniques outlined below can help prevent heat stroke injuries and illnesses:

- Provide consistent breaks/rest periods for all athletes and coaches.
- Make available shade/fans/cooling systems, if possible. During periods when athletes are not participating, but may be waiting on the sidelines, athletes should not sit or stand in sunshine or sit in cars without air conditioning for extended periods of time.
- Assure there is a continuing supply of fresh drinking water at all outdoor practices and competitions.
- Have access to medical personnel on site, if possible.
- Promote the use of sunscreen and have it available.
- Assure that athletes are wearing clothing that is loose fitting, light colors and cotton, if possible. Including hats where possible.
- Consider the Health Index (temperature and humidity combined) and suspend competition (or practice) if heat conditions become overly oppressive or if several athletes are laboring or show any symptoms listed below
- Avoid activities in the early and mid afternoon hours (11 a.m. to 2 p.m. is usually the hottest time of day).

Coaches/volunteers should be alert to the symptoms of overheating and dehydration

Increased thirst

- headache
- dry mouth and swollen tongue
- weakness
- dizziness
- confusion
- sluggishness
- vomiting
- Inability to sweat

Anyone experiencing the above symptoms should seek medical attention immediately.

To increase the fluid intake of a person who has become dehydrated or is beginning to show any of the above symptoms, have that person try the following:

- sip small amounts of water (too much water too fast is not effective and may be harmful)
- drink carbohydrate/electrolyte-containing drinks (e.g., PowerAde or Pedialyte). Carbonated soft drinks or drinks with caffeine should not be consumed.
- suck on Popsicles made from juices or sports drinks
- suck on ice chips
- sip through a straw
- cool water-soaked towel around the back of the neck may provide some relief