



Living in Iowa most of us know to expect some extremely hot summer days, but extreme heat waves can cause serious health problems, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and even death. It's not usually the one or two days of 95 degree temperatures that are dangerous, but when the temperatures are extremely hot (mid 90s and higher), not very low overnight, and when these conditions last for several days in a row. This cumulative effect of the extreme heat can stress the body and increase risk for heat related illness or death. Older adults, people with chronic health conditions, outdoor workers, athletes practicing outdoors and young children are at higher risk.

With the start of school, many students are participating in athletics and practicing outdoors. As their bodies are adapting to new levels of exertion, extreme heat can put additional stress on their bodies. The Iowa High School Athletic Association has been implementing new guidelines to help avoid heat related illness in athletes. The guidelines are centered around "acclimatization" or easing the athletes into lengthy and strenuous activity. Because the greatest danger from heat comes when the body is not used to extreme heat or strenuous activity, athletes are now limited to one practice per day for the first short period of practices and football players cannot wear pads until they have completed several practices, for example.

These guidelines were adapted from the Korey Stringer Institute at the University of Connecticut which is dedicated to reducing heat related deaths in athletes. Many of these same principals can be used by parents, little league coaches and teachers supervising recess:

- Be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke;
- Slowly increase activity intensity and duration;
- If possible move outdoor activity indoors or to morning hours;
- Drink water all day. If you are thirsty you are already dehydrated;
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or indoors.

Signs of heat exhaustion include feeling faint, body aches, stomach pain, nausea, and elevated body temperature. Heat stroke on the other hand is an emergency situation and can be life threatening. Signs and symptoms to watch for include shock, unconsciousness, and seizures. Call 911 if you suspect heat stroke or heat exhaustion.

The number one way to reduce the chance of heat stroke or heat exhaustion is to spend at least 2 hours every day in air conditioning. To learn more about Iowa's athletic practice guidelines and heat exhaustion and heat stroke prevention visit www.ksi.uconn.edu.

The Iowa School Safety Coalition was formed in December 2012. Participating organizations include Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Iowa State Fire Marshal, Iowa Division of Intelligence and Fusion Center, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Emergency Management Association, Des Moines Police Department, Iowa State Education Association, Iowa Association of School Boards, School Administrators of Iowa, American Institute of Architects – Iowa Chapter, EMC Insurance Companies.