



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Keep Your Cool*

*Time-Loss Heat Illness Among High School Athletes — United States, 2005–2009*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Sports can result in a variety of injuries, but the most risky part of the game is not necessarily injuries caused by collisions. Since 1995, 31 high school football players have died from heat stroke, and thousands of other student athletes are sidelined by heat-related illness every year.

Dr. Ellen Yard is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Environmental Health. She's joining us today to discuss ways to prevent heat-related illness among athletes. Welcome to the show, Ellen.

[Dr. Yard] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ellen, do most heat-related problems among athletes occur in football players?

[Dr. Yard] Well, all athletes are actually susceptible to developing heat-related problems. They are most common in the hot or humid summer months, so we do see them, most commonly, among football players, just because they're out there practicing in August when it's really hot and humid.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the signs of heat-related illness?

[Dr. Yard] Heat-related illness can start off with just being very thirsty, very tired, feeling kind of weak, possibly developing some dizziness, headache, nausea.

[Dr. Gaynes] Ellen, how can you tell when a heat-related illness has become a medical emergency?

[Dr. Yard] When an athlete develops an extremely high body temperature, they develop signs and symptoms such as red, hot, and dry skin; a very fast heart rate; a throbbing headache; they might become dizzy, confused, or unconscious. This would be a medical emergency and is when you would want to call 9-1-1.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the best treatments for heat-related illness?

[Dr. Yard] If heat-related illness is caught early on, it can be treated simply by removing the athlete from play, putting them in a cool area, providing them with a lot of fluids. When heat illness progresses to a medical emergency, we need to cool the athlete's body as quickly as

possible, and this can include putting the athlete into a tub or a kiddie pool that's filled up with ice water, or at the very least, putting ice packs around the athlete's body as the paramedics are on the way.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some strategies for preventing heat-related illness?

[Dr. Yard] Well, it's important to remember that all heat-related illness is preventable. It starts by coaches making sure that the athletes have 10 to 14 days to get used to hot or humid weather at the beginning of the season. During very hot or humid days, the athletic activity should be restricted and coaches and athletic trainers should make sure that plenty of rest and water breaks are provided. And finally, coaches and athletes all need to make sure that they're properly hydrating themselves - that they're getting enough water, both before, during, and after athletic activity.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information ways to prevent heat-related illness among athletes?

[Dr. Yard] Listeners can go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and type the phrase "extreme heat" into the search box.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks Ellen. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Ellen Yard about ways to prevent heat-related illness among athletes.

Remember, to help prevent heat-related illness, coaches should give players 10 to 14 days to get used to the weather, and also ensure that they get plenty of water breaks. In addition, all athletic staff should be trained to recognize and treat heat-related illness.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

*[Announcer]* For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.