

HEAT POLICY

1. Responsibility

1.1 Football Federation Northern Territory (FFNT) and its registered clubs and members have a responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff, volunteers, players, officials and spectators.

1.2 The FFNT Heat Policy will assist volunteers, players, officials and spectators to undertake necessary action in cases of extreme hot weather, in order to prevent injury, and possible death from heat illness.

2. Risk Factors

2.1 FFNT recognises that the risk of an elevated body temperature from high intensity sport in a hot environment is significant, and can lead to heat illness presented as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

This is a potentially fatal condition and must be treated immediately.

2.2 FFNT recognizes that there are a number of factors that may affect participants during days of extreme heat, including humidity, duration/intensity, timing (especially between 11am and 3pm) hydration, fitness level and gender.

2.3 Women, children and the elderly may also suffer more from heat during exercise. This may be due to a greater percentage of body fat in women, and poorly developed sweating mechanisms within children.

2.3a Children

Prior to puberty children are at increased risk of heat illness due to:

- Less efficient sweating
- Increased surface area to volume ratio
- Ability to ignore thirst and fatigue due to high sporting motivation
- Children report symptoms less frequently than adults meaning there is an increased onus on coaches, referees and medical support staff to be vigilant for signs of heat illness

Recommendations for children:

- Coaches are role models. The coach should set a good example by wearing a hat and using sunscreen and encourage children to do the same
- Temperature thresholds for increased drink breaks or postponement of fixtures are lower for pre-pubertal children (less than 13 years old) than post-pubertal children/adults
- Flavoured drink availability helps to increase fluid consumption in children
- Low threshold for withdrawing an individual player from play if they are pre-pubertal
- Coaches, team officials and medical staff should be especially vigilant for signs of heat illness

3. Prevention

Acclimatisation:

- Players should gradually increase their exposure to hot and humid conditions over at least 3 weeks so that the body can adapt and improve its ability to cool itself

Maintain hydration:

- The most efficient form of cooling is via sweating and if the body becomes dehydrated, sweating becomes less efficient
- Drinking water does not cure heat illness but it may help prevent it
- Consuming 300-500ml of water 30 minutes prior to playing is recommended

Avoid extreme temperatures:

- Avoid playing in midday sun where possible
- During breaks of play, players should seek shade/cooler areas whenever possible
- When not playing (coaches, substitutes) use of a broad-brimmed hat is recommended

Additional breaks of play

- This will allow players a chance to cool down and consume more fluid

Wear light coloured clothing that is well-wicked/breathable (allows effective sweating)

Avoid oil-based sunscreens (prevents effective sweating)

- Use water-based sunscreens/lip balms with a minimum SPF30 rating and reapply 2 hourly

Do not play if unwell:

- Playing with an infection can increase the 'internal heat' generated

Avoid use of certain medications:

- Cold and flu remedies such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine
- Anti-histamines reduce sweating efficiency
- Caffeine and alcohol increase the risk of heat illness
- Illicit drugs, especially cocaine, methamphetamine (ice) and amphetamines (speed), can all cause heatstroke too
- In general, medications should only be taken after consultation with your doctor

4. Competitions

4.1 Club/Team officials shall check the temperature (WBGT) throughout every competition match day, as published by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology at www.bom.gov.au

4.2 The WBGT heat guidelines below should be utilised to determine the necessary course of action.

Adult Heat Guidelines (15 years and up)

| WBGT | Risk Level | Recommended Action | |
|------------------|----------------|--|--|
| | | Training | Matches (Including training matches) |
| Less than 18.9°C | Generally safe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No alteration of exercise plan | |
| 19.0°C - 20.9°C | Low risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No alteration of exercise plan Ensure players are drinking fluid | |
| 21.0°C - 25.9°C | Moderate risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks breaks every 20 minutes No alteration of exercise plan Ensure players are drinking fluid Increased vigilance from coaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure players are drinking fluid Increased vigilance from coaching staff |
| 26.0°C – 29.9°C | High risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks breaks every 20 minutes Ensure players are drinking fluid Reduce intensity of exercise Replace running drills or match play with skill-based drills Limit duration to less than 60 minutes per session Increased vigilance from coaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforced drink breaks by Match Officials (2 mins duration) at midpoint of each half Ensure players are drinking fluids Increased vigilance from coaching staff |
| 30.0°C and above | Very high risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider postponing training sessions Contact FFNT Competitions staff to request postponement of any match(es) until the WBGT is 29.9°C or less | |

Child Heat Guideline (14s and below)

| WBGT | RISK LEVEL | RECOMMENDED ACTION | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| | | Training | Matches (Including training matches) |
| Less than 18.9°C | Generally safe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No alteration of exercise plan | |
| 19.0°C - 20.9°C | Low risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No alteration of exercise plan Ensure players are drinking fluid | |
| 21.0°C - 25.9°C | Moderate risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks breaks every 15 minutes Reduce intensity of exercise Ensure players are drinking fluid Increased vigilance from coaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinks break (2 mins duration) at midpoint of each half Ensure players are drinking fluid Increased vigilance from coaching staff |
| 26.0°C – 27.9°C | High risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit training to 1 hour duration Drinks breaks every 15 minutes Ensure players are drinking fluid Reduce intensity of exercise Replace running drills or match play with skill-based drills Increased vigilance from coaching staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlimited substitutions Drinks breaks (2 mins duration) at midpoint of each half Immerse hands in cool water at half-time if possible Ensure players are drinking fluid Increased vigilance from coaching staff |
| 28.0°C and above | Very high risk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider postponing training sessions Contact FFNT Competitions staff to request postponement of any match(es) until the WBGT is 27.9°C or less | |

4.3 Risk of heat illness is cumulative meaning the risk for illness tends to be higher on the 2nd and 3rd days of a tournament held over consecutive days

4.4 In the event of a multiple day event, temperature thresholds for alterations in training and match play may be lowered

5. Club Requirements

5.1 Clubs shall encourage all players and officials to drink fluids prior to and during all competitions and training sessions to avoid dehydration and to rehydrate following competition matches and training sessions.

5.2 During all competition matches and training sessions, Club and Team Officials shall ensure that there is an adequate supply of water for drinking and that an appropriate number of drink breaks are allocated.

5.3 During all competitions and training sessions, Clubs shall ensure that water bottles are accessible to players. Water bottles shall not to be permitted to be thrown onto the field of play, players should be handed a water bottle from the side of the field.

5.4 Clubs shall make every effort to provide adequate resources for players, including the provision of water, ice, fans, cooling vests and Coaches shall be responsible for monitoring their players to ensure that they are fit to participate or to continue participation.

6. First Aid

Heat Illness Treatment Plan

- It is recommended for any suspected Heat Illness that an urgent assessment be performed by a medical officer, if one is available

Heat Stress (Conscious, behaving normally)

- If there is any doubt of how serious the heat illness is, treat as heatstroke (see below)
- Players suspected of suffering from mild heat illness should be immersed in an ice water bath. Once shivering commences the core temperature has usually reduced to a safe level
- If symptoms improve rapidly the player must be observed for 2 hours to ensure full symptom recovery. This should occur in a cool area (preferably an air-conditioned room). This is very important as a player can 're-heat' even at rest
- If ice water immersion is unavailable or not tolerated, evaporative cooling methods should be used. Lie the player down in a cool place (preferably air-conditioned room) with legs elevated on a chair, remove the players clothing and spray the player with water repetitively and cool with a fan simultaneously. Simple immersion of the hands and feet in cold water may be of benefit too
- If a player becomes symptomatic again despite cooling, they will need to be transferred via ambulance to hospital as an emergency

Heatstroke (Unconscious or altered behaviour)

- An ambulance should be called immediately
- Whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive, lie the player down in a cool place (preferably air-conditioned room) with legs elevated on a chair, remove the players clothing and spray the player with water repetitively and cool with a fan simultaneously. Simple immersion of the hands and feet in cold water may be of benefit too
- DO NOT place in an ice water bath if the player is unconscious

Return To Exercise After Heat Illnesses

- **After suffering from 'heat stress'**
 - No player can return to sport on the same day even if symptoms completely resolve
 - 48 hours of rest is recommended before carefully recommencing exercise
- **After suffering from 'heatstroke'**
 - Complete rest from exercise for 7 days
 - Should be examined 1 week after resolution of symptoms and clearance provided for return to sport by a doctor
 - Once given clearance, gradually increase exercise volume and intensity, starting in cooler conditions with increasing exposure to hotter temperatures over 2 weeks
 - If heat tolerance exists after a minimum of 2 weeks training then return to full competition is permitted