

Dehydration Fact Sheet



What is dehydration?

Dehydration is the excessive loss of fluids from the body. It occurs when the total amount of water lost through sweating, urination, diarrhea, and/or vomiting is greater than the fluids taken in. A child with severe dehydration must be hospitalized to receive intravenous fluids.

What are the signs of dehydration and heat exhaustion?

Dehydration places children at risk for serious conditions like heat illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Early signs of *dehydration* may include:

- Thirst
- Dry or sticky mouth
- Headache
- Muscle cramping
- Irritability
- Extreme fatigue
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Decreased performance

Early signs of *heat exhaustion* may include:

- Nausea
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Heavy sweating
- Rapid, weak heartbeat
- Dark-colored urine
- Cool, moist, pale skin
- Cramps
- Headache
- Fatigue

How to prevent dehydration:

Drink before activity:

12 ounces of fluid 30 minutes before activity begins

Drink during activity:

Children under 90 pounds: 5 ounces every 20 minutes

Children over 90 pounds: 9 ounces every 20 minutes

Drink after activity:

Drink every 20 minutes during the first hour after the activity to make up for fluid loss.

EASY TIP A child's gulp equals a ½ ounce of fluid. Your child should drink at least **10 gulps every 20 minutes** of play.

What to do when dehydration and heat illness occurs:

Treatment of dehydration and heat illness should take place immediately. Depending on the severity of the situation, seek medical attention from a certified athletic trainer or dial 911 for Emergency Medical Services.

- Move the child to a cool place.
- Have the child drink a glass of cool, lightly salted water or a sports drink, such as Gatorade.
- Raise the child's legs 8-12 inches.
- Sponge the child's head, face and trunk with cool, wet cloths.
- Fan the child.
- Keep the child from physical activity for the remainder of the day.

Comparison of Heat Illnesses

Heat Stroke

(The most severe and life-threatening)

- Dry, flushed hot skin
- Very high body temperature
- No sweating
- Life-threatening

Heat Exhaustion

(Less critical, but requires prompt attention)

- Moist, pale, cool skin
- Normal or sub-normal temperature
- Heavy sweating
- Serious, but not life-threatening

For more information:

usa.safekids.org

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