

With many young school athletes working hard to prepare for sports year-round, Safe Kids Gwinnett encourages parents and coaches to keep children safe on and off the field and prevent sports injuries, including heat-related illnesses. Nearly 3/4 of U.S. households have at least one child who plays organized sports. Unfortunately, about 3.5 million children receive medical treatment for a sports-related injury each year, and as many as half of these injuries are preventable according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

With scorching high temperatures during some sports seasons and vigorous practice sessions underway for school-age children, parents and coaches have an even greater role to play in keeping children safe and injury free. It's vitally important to set realistic expectations for children about sports and understand how to help them prepare properly, prevent injuries and play safely.

The summer heat has brought particular attention to the dangers of heat stroke, one of the leading causes of sudden death in sports. According to the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, the number of heat-related injuries from 1997 to 2006 increased 133 percent. Georgia leads the nation in heat-related deaths of football players over the past 15 years.

According to a leading expert on heatstroke, Dr. Douglas Casa, over the past five years, the number of heat stroke deaths from exertion in youth sports is higher than in any five-year period in the past 35 years. *"One of the most powerful protective steps in assuring that athletes stay hydrated is proper time and access to fluids during physical activity,"* said Casa, a researcher and professor at the University of Connecticut and chief operating officer at the school's Korey Stringer Institute. *"Coaches and parents supervising youth activities in the intense heat must have guidelines in place so that youth athletes can stay cool and properly hydrated during practices and events."*

Safe Kids offers these important tips for coaches, parents, and league organizers to prevent heat illness and dehydration:

- Don't wait for kids to tell you they are thirsty. Take regular water breaks (every 15-20 minutes).
- Young athletes should drink water at least 30 minutes before play and every 15-20 minutes during play.
- For fluid intake during physical activity, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends:
 - 5 oz. for an 88-pound child every 20 minutes
 - 9 oz. for a 132-pound adolescent every 20 minutes
 - A child's gulp equals a ½ ounce of fluid so generally, your child should drink about 10 gulps for every 20 minutes of play
- Use urine color as a guide for hydration status:
 - Light like lemonade then the child is likely hydrated
 - Dark like apple juice then he/she is likely dehydrated

For more information on Safe Kids Gwinnett's sports safety clinics or sports injury prevention in general, please call Safe Kids Gwinnett at 678.518.4854 or visit www.safekids.org/sports.

About Safe Kids

Safe Kids Gwinnett works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the number one cause of death for children in the United States. Safe Kids Gwinnett is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Gwinnett was founded in 2010 and is led by Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

For more information about sports-related injuries and heat stroke, please contact Safe Kids Gwinnett at email safekids@gwinnettcounty.com or 678.518.4854.

