



SMARTPLAY

Beat the heat

Summer sport can turn into a risky pursuit when the sun is beating down.

Playing sport or exercising in the heat of summer can put participants at risk of cramp, heat exhaustion and even the fatal condition of heat stroke.

But it's not all bad news. With a little common sense everyone can enjoy the benefits of summer sport and exercise, without the risk of heat injury.

To help beat the heat, Smartplay, Sports Medicine Australia's sports injury prevention program funded by VicHealth and the Department of Planning and Community Development (Sport and Recreation Victoria), offers the following advice:

Stay hydrated

During activity, especially in hot conditions, a substantial amount of water is lost through sweating. This increases the risk of dehydration. Dehydration decreases performance and contributes to fatigue which may lead to cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. To keep hydrated drink fluids (water or sports drinks) before, during and after exercise. However don't rely on thirst, as it is a poor indicator of fluid needs. Drink at least two cups (500ml) an hour before exercise, 150ml every 15 minutes during exercise and enough to fully re-hydrate after exercise.

Wear the proper clothing

Clothing for warm conditions should allow easy evaporation of sweat from the skin. It should be light coloured, lightweight and loose fitting, and provide protection from the sun. Also remember to wear sunglasses, 30+ sunscreen and a hat.

Time activity

Schedule activity to avoid the hottest part of the day, between 11am and 3pm. By undertaking activity in the early morning, late afternoon or night the risk of falling victim to the heat is reduced. Also take rest breaks, in the shade if possible.

Modify warm up

In hot conditions, reduce the duration and intensity of warming up to minimise an increase in body heat and temperature before activity.



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Take medical conditions into consideration

Those who have recently experienced a high temperature, infection, diarrhoea or vomiting should NOT take part in strenuous exercise. Those with a medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, heart problem, epilepsy, or obesity, or are taking medication, may experience difficulties exercising in the heat and should seek advice from a doctor.

Be aware of heat illness risk factors

The following factors contribute to the risk of heat illness:

- Dehydration
- High exercise intensity
- Lack of fitness
- Previous history of heat illness or heat intolerance
- High air temperature
- High humidity
- Heavy clothing
- Lack of acclimatisation
- Illness and medical conditions

Know heat illness symptoms

Symptoms of heat illness are:

- Light-headedness
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- No sweating
- Obvious lack of skill and coordination or unsteadiness
- Confusion
- Aggressive or irrational behaviour
- Altered consciousness
- Collapsing
- Ashen grey pale skin



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Know what to do

To aid heat illness recovery, you should:

- Lie down in a cool place
- Raise legs and pelvis to improve blood pressure
- Loosen and remove excessive clothing
- Cool by wetting skin and fanning
- Drink water
- Apply wrapped ice packs to groin and armpits
- If there is no improvement, seek medical help.

For more advice on how to beat the heat, download the Smartplay *Beat the Heat Fact Sheet* at www.smartplay.com.au or for hard copies phone (03) 9674 8777 or email smartplay@vic.sma.org.au

Beat the heat checklist

- Wearing light clothing (light in colour and light in weight)?
- Wearing a hat?
- Wearing sunglasses?
- Applied 30+ sunscreen?
- Have a high level of physical fitness?
- Intending on exercising moderately?
- Feeling well?
- Not recovering from a recent illness?
- Preparing to drink fluids before, during and after activity?
- Planning on being active in the early morning, late afternoon or night?
- Going to modify your warm up?
- Considered medical conditions?