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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Parents should take lead to protect kids from heat during sporting events

Most parents don't question their children's athletic coaches as long as the coaches seem to be capable and responsible. But there's a good chance the coach — especially if he's a volunteer parent with no formal training — doesn't know the rules of the game for prevention of heat illness, monitoring and treatment.

The authors of *Climatic Heat Stress and the Exercising Child and Adolescent*, a new policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics, offer the following advice on what parents can do to protect their children from heat illness:

- Talk with the coach at the beginning of the season about his or her level of understanding about how heat stress affects young athletes.
 - Check with organizers of tournaments to find out if they are prepared to treat athletes who suffer heat stress.
 - Work with other parents to bring coolers to tournaments filled with ice, small ice bags, and wet washcloths and bedsheets.
 - Take kids to an air-conditioned building to lower their body heat during breaks between games.
- Encourage children to get used to intense heat and humidity gradually in the weeks before the sports season.
 - Educate kids about heat illness, including:
 - the symptoms, such as feeling sick, confused, dizzy, sleepy or otherwise ill while exercising in hot weather;
 - prevention strategies, such as drinking enough fluids;
 - the importance of wearing loose-fitting light clothing; and
 - the necessity of adequate cooling and rest periods in shaded areas.
 - Empower children to say "no" respectfully to a coach who is asking them to do something they feel is risky in intense heat.

— Robert Musinski

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