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## Important Information about Acclimatization and Exertional Heat Illness Precautions

The OHSAA would like to remind all member schools of the following information that should be reviewed with coaching and sports medicine staff prior to any interscholastic practice this August. Please remember that there are four OHSAA sports which have a required acclimatization period prior to the commencing of any contests or physical contact, in the case of football. The sports of boys and girls cross country and 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade track and field require a minimum of 10 days of interscholastic practice prior to any competition for a student. The following is the regulation that addresses the mandatory five day period in football.

***Five Days of Acclimatization Required*** — *Acclimatization is a period of time when players can become accustomed to the heat and humidity. Health professionals recommend at least a five-day period. All football candidates must participate in five days of pre-season non-contact acclimatization prior to any physical contact. No pads may be worn on the first two days. Shorts, helmets, shoes may be worn. Shoulder pads may be added on day three and four, but no contact is permitted. Full equipment may be worn on the fifth day, but contact is prohibited. Candidates reporting late must participate in five days of non-contact acclimatization. This rule applies to all school teams grade 7-12.*

Please remind staff members of the following precautions for **all sports competed outdoors and/or in a hot, humid environment.**

- **Stress to participants the importance of properly hydrating** themselves during the day leading up to the contest, and also to drink 8-to-12 ounces of water or sport drinks 20 minutes prior to the contest. This practice can help prevent problems during practice and contests.
- **Schools should have unlimited amounts of water** and sport drinks on hand during a contest, and coaches in team sports should be prepared to play a lot of players rather than just the starters.
- **Contest officials are permitted to establish predetermined breaks** during a football contest, such as halfway through each period. At that time players can drink water and remove their equipment, which should also take place at halftime (the more skin that is exposed, the more cooling that can take place). **This provision also applies to all other sports.**
- **NFHS football playing rules allow the referee to shorten periods** per mutual agreement by the opposing coaches. In addition, by mutual agreement a game may be terminated at any time.
- **Contest managers are advised to monitor conditions** for others affiliated with the contest, like cheerleaders, band members, coaches, officials and especially spectators.

- **In football, if schools decide NOT to play a contest, it becomes an open date for both.** If one school desires to play but the other does not, there are no forfeits involved. Again, it would become an open date for both schools. However, schools do have the option to reschedule contests, and OHSAA regulations do permit schools to play more than one contest per week. There also are no OHSAA regulations that prohibit games from being played on Sundays. The same concepts apply to all other OHSAA sports.
- **Please review the OHSAA policy on inclement weather and lightning.** In short, upon the first indication that thunderstorm development is within 15 miles of the game site, the activity shall be suspended until 30 minutes after the storm has left this 15-mile zone. Individuals should move to a safe area until the storm has moved away.
- **Know both the Temperature and Humidity.** The greater the humidity the more difficult it is for the body to cool itself. Test the air prior to practice or a game using a wet bulb, globe, temperature index (WBGT index) which is based on the combined effects of air temperature, relative humidity, radiant heat and air movement. The following precautions are recommended when using the WBGT Index: (ACSM's Guidelines for the Team Physician, 1991)  
 Below 64 - Unlimited activity  
 65-72 - Moderate risk  
 74-82 - High Risk  
 82 plus - Very high risk  
 There is also a weather guide for activities that last 30 minutes or more (Fox and Mathews, 1981) which involves knowing the relative humidity and air temperature:

AIR TEMP	DANGER ZONE	CRITICAL ZONE
70 F	80% RH	100% RH
75 F	70% RH	100% RH
80 F	50% RH	80% RH
85 F	40% RH	68% RH
90 F	30% RH	55% RH
95 F	20% RH	40% RH
100 F	10% RH	30% RH

RH = RELATIVE HUMIDITY

One other method of measuring the relative humidity is the use of a sling psychrometer, which measures wet bulb temperature. The wet bulb temperature should be measured prior to practice and the intensity and duration of practice adjusted accordingly. Recommendations are as follows:

Under 60 F	Safe but always observe athletes
61-65 F	Observe players carefully
66-70 F	Caution
71-75 F	Shorter practice sessions and more frequent water and rest breaks
75+ F	Danger level and extreme caution

Please note that all fall sports mailings will contain additional information for coaches and officials relative to this topic. Thank you for your assistance in educating your staff, students and parents about these issues of vital importance to the safety and welfare of all interscholastic participants.