

Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines

Practice or competition in hot and/or humid environmental conditions poses special problems for student-athletes. Heat illness is a primary concern in these conditions. Although deaths from heat illness are rare, constant surveillance and education are necessary to prevent heat-related problems.

Core Principles:

- 1. *Acclimatization Period:*** The first three days of football practice commencing on the first starting day – Monday, August 11th. Helmets and shoulder pads with shorts the first 2 days and full gear on third day with contact permitted on third day.
 - These practices are limited to 5 hours of practice daily for the 3 days of heat acclimatization. Practice sessions may be no longer than 3 hours in length and teams must have 2 hours of rest (recovery period) between sessions.
 - If starting the previous week by school option, these days are to be three consecutive days and are not to be earlier than Wednesday the previous week – August 6th. Helmets and shoulder pads with shorts the first 2 days and full gear on third day. No contact on third day (prior to start date).
 - If more than 48 hours between the conclusion of the heat acclimatization program and first day of practice, the program will not have its intended affect medically. Therefore, these practices are limited to five hours per day with no contact on the third day since it is prior to the start of the stipulated fall season.
 - If starting the previous week option is chosen, Monday's practice – August 11th – may be 5 hours with a 2 hours buffer between practices and contact may be included.
 - Prevention of Heat Illness from the Sport Medicine Guidelines of the PIAA Handbook should be observed. These include regular measurements of environmental conditions. See Sports Medicine Guidelines for more detail or consult with your athletic trainer and/or team physician.
- 2. *Scrimmages:*** A team shall not participate in a scrimmage prior to the first available scrimmage date as provided in Article XVI: Season and Out-of-Season Rules and Regulations of the PIAA By-Laws.
- 3. *Participation Limitation:*** No Team, no individual member or members of such Team, and no individual representing any PIAA member school, may Practice or participate in an Inter-School Practice, Scrimmage, Contest, and/or Open Gym on more than six days in any Calendar Week during the Regular Season.

4. **Out-of-Season Activities:** General conditioning provides only partial heat acclimatization. Therefore, student-athletes should be exposed gradually to hot and/or humid environmental conditions to provide better heat acclimatization. Each exposure also should involve a gradual increase in the amount of exercise that is undertaken over a period of days to weeks until the exercise intensity and duration is comparable to that likely to occur in competition. If conditions are extreme, training or competition should be held during a cooler time of the day.
- When protective gear and clothing is authorized by the school Principal outside of the defined season, frequent rest periods should be scheduled so that the gear and clothing can be loosened to allow evaporation of sweat and other forms of heat loss. During the acclimatization process, it may be advisable to use a minimum of protective gear and clothing and to Practice in T-shirts, shorts, socks and shoes. Excessive tape and outer clothing that restrict sweat evaporation should be avoided. Rubberized suits should never be used.

(Definitions for the purpose of these Guidelines)

Minimum Practice Time: The minimum practice time for the first three days is 3 hours per day.

Maximum Practice Time: The maximum allotted time per day for practice is 5 hours and teams must have 2 hours of rest between sessions.

Practice: The time a player engages in physical activity. It is defined that any practice session be no greater than three (3) hours in length. Warm-up, stretching, conditioning, weight training and 'cool-down' periods are all considered practice.

Recovery Period: A minimum of a two (2) hour recovery period must be provided after any session.

Walk-through: No protective equipment or strenuous activity permitted. Only balls and field markers (cones) may be used.

For additional information and articles on heat acclimatization, access the links below to www.pennlive.com and the PIAA Sport Medicine Guidelines section of the PIAA Handbook at:

<http://www.piaa.org/resources/handbook/default.aspx>

http://www.pennlive.com/sports/index.ssf/2013/03/piaa_board_of_directors_adopts.html

http://www.pennlive.com/sports/index.ssf/2013/03/piaa_heat_acclimatization_poli.html#incart_flyout_sports

http://www.pennlive.com/sports/index.ssf/2013/03/piaa_heat_acclimatization_poli_1.html

Common Question & Answers Regarding Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines

How many days must the heat acclimatization program be enforced?

Three days. The first three days of football practice starting with the first day of fall practice. A school may choose the option of starting the previous week. If this option is chosen, these days are to be three (3) consecutive days and it is not to start earlier than Wednesday the previous week – August 6th. Helmets and shoulder pads with shorts the first 2 days and full gear on third day. No contact on third day (it's prior to start date).

What is the rationale for not starting heat acclimatization earlier in the week and giving players 4 days of rest before the official start of practice?

The rationale for this is if there is more than 48 hours between the conclusion of the heat acclimatization program and first day of practice, the program will not have its intended affect medically. Therefore, these practices are limited to five hours per day with no contact on the third day since it is prior to the start of the stipulated fall season.

What are the maximum and minimum time periods for heat acclimatization?

These sessions are limited to 5 hours of practice daily for the 3 days of heat acclimatization. Practice sessions may be no longer than 3 hours in length and teams must have 2 hours of rest between sessions. The minimum amount of time for heat acclimatization is 3 hours per day.

Who is responsible for the development and enforcement of this program?

The head football coach, in consultation with the school's medical staff (team physician/athletic training staff), is to develop their own three (3) day program. It is to be submitted, in writing, to the school's principal for their approval and supervision. The enforcement of this will be a team effort between all parties, however, the principal of the school, as with all PIAA governance, is responsible for the adherence and enforcement of PIAA rules and regulations.

Do all players have to go through the heat acclimatization?

Yes all players have to go through this process before they represent their school by playing in a scrimmage or a contest. This is to be monitored by each school.

Is this heat acclimatization program only for football?

Yes it is for football only. The amount of protective equipment that must be worn by players does not allow for the body to cool off through perspiration in a normal fashion. Other sports do not have these requirements and coupled with the fact that 52 football players, 41 in high school, have died since 1995 to heat related causes has raised the awareness nationally to provide for a pre-season football acclimatization program.