



Eastern Massachusetts Region  
Cape Cod and Islands Chapter  
286 South Street  
Hyannis, MA 02610  
Tel (508) 775-1540  
Fax (508) 771-2209  
www.ccredcross.org

## *Media Alert* M E D I A   A L E R T

For more information, contact Erica Waasdorp at (508) 776-1224 or John Levin at (508) 487-0583

### **For Immediate Release**

### ***Red Cross Offers Tips to Keep Athletes Safe in Extreme Heat*** **Recommendations for Teams Practicing for Fall Sports**

**Hyannis, MA, August 17, 2011** — In the wake of recent student athlete deaths due to excessive heat, the American Red Cross recommends team officials, coaches and parents take steps to help ensure the safety of their players during extreme heat.

“Keeping athletes safe is crucial,” said John Levin, Spokes person for the American Red Cross Cape Cod and Islands Chapter. “Make sure athletes stay hydrated. Have everyone drink plenty of fluids like water or sports drinks with electrolytes before, during and after activities. Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.”

During the hot weather, team practices should be scheduled for early in the day and later in the evening to avoid exposing players to the hottest times of the day. Other steps teams, schools and parents should take to protect their athletes include:

- Allow athletes to get acclimated to the heat by reducing the intensity of practice until they are more accustomed to it.
- Make frequent, longer breaks a regular part of practice. About every 20 minutes stop for fluids and try to keep the athletes in the shade if possible.
- Reduce the amount of heavy equipment—like football pads—athletes wear in extremely hot, humid weather.
- Dress athletes, when appropriate, in net-type jerseys or light-weight, light-colored, cotton T-shirts and shorts.
- Know the signs of heat-related emergencies and monitor athletes closely.

“Knowing the signs of heat-related emergencies and how to help someone who is suffering from the heat is vital,” Levin stressed. “Coaches and parents need to be vigilant in watching for signs of heat-related emergencies. Athletes should inform their coaches, teachers or parents if they are not feeling well.”

**Heat cramps** are muscular pains and spasms that usually occur in the legs or abdomen caused by exposure to high heat and humidity and loss of fluids and electrolytes. Heat cramps are often an early sign that the body is having trouble with the heat. If someone is experiencing heat cramps:

- Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Stretching, massaging and icing the affected muscle may help.
- Give a half glass of cool water or a sports drink with electrolytes every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse.

**Heat exhaustion** is caused by a combination of exercise induced heat and fluid and electrolyte loss from sweating. Signs of heat exhaustion include cool, moist, pale or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; and exhaustion. To help someone with these symptoms:

- Move the person to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing. Spray him or her with water or apply cool, wet cloths or towels to the skin. Fan the person. If the person is conscious, give small amounts of cool water or a sports drink with electrolytes to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Watch for changes in his or her condition.
- If the person refuses water, vomits or begins to lose consciousness, **call 9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

**Heat stroke** (also known as sunstroke) is a life-threatening condition in which a person’s temperature control system stops working and the body is unable to cool itself.

- Signs of heat stroke include those of heat exhaustion and hot, red skin which may be dry or moist; change or loss of consciousness; seizures; vomiting; and high body temperature.



Eastern Massachusetts Region

Cape Cod and Islands Chapter

286 South Street

Hyannis, MA 02610

Tel (508) 775-1540

Fax (508) 771-2209

[www.cciredcross.org](http://www.cciredcross.org)

- More -

- Heat stroke is life-threatening. **Call 9-1-1** or the local emergency number immediately.
- Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the person's body by immersing them up to their neck in cold water if possible. If unable to immerse them, continue rapid cooling by applying bags of ice or cold packs wrapped in a cloth to the wrists, ankles, groin, neck and armpits, spraying with water and/or fanning.

Learn how to prevent and respond to heat-related and other emergencies by taking a First Aid/CPR/AED course. Contact the American Red Cross Cape Cod and Islands chapter at 286 South Street, Hyannis, MA 02601, (508) 775-1540, [info@cciredcross.org](mailto:info@cciredcross.org) or visit [redcross.org/training](http://redcross.org/training) to register.

**About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or join our blog at <http://blog.redcross.org>.*

###