



Rhode Island Athletic Trainers ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUMMER HEAT CAN MEAN TROUBLE FOR KIDS IN PRE-SEASON SPORTS

Providence, RI (August 31, 2004) - The month of August signals the start of pre-season sports practices for thousands of high school and youth athletes across the Ocean State. While many of these young people are concerned about getting new cleats or uniforms, and their parents about how their child will perform, their certified athletic trainers (ATC's) are focused on preventing and treating heat illness.

"Education and communication are the two most important aspects to in preventing heat illness", states John Rock ATC, Head Athletic Trainer at Providence College. "Parents and coaches need to understand the signs and symptoms of heat illnesses and have an emergency action plan in place if a life threatening situation arise. Rock emphasizes, "It is imperative for everyone involved to know what to do."

A new research study conducted last summer by the Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI) indicates that about 70% of high school football players showed up for practice significantly dehydrated — putting them at greater risk for heat illness and injury. However, the research also showed that when a team employs a simple hydration plan with their athletes, the number of players showing up to practice much better hydrated increases significantly.

"As an administrator and certified athletic trainer it is very important to make sure our student-athletes are well hydrated, and our coaches take more frequent water breaks, especially during the hot days of August," said George Finn ATC, Director of Athletics and Student Activities for Barrington High School.

Each year about 300 Americans die in heat related incidents, some of them healthy athletes. Each year since 1995, an average of three football players at the high school, college and pro levels, have died from heat stroke," said W. Larry Kenney, Ph.D., professor of physiology and kinesiology at Pennsylvania State University. The overriding and most important factor is that most exertional heat illness cases are preventable, and can be successfully treated if onsite personnel identify the condition and implement appropriate and timely care.

The Rhode Island Athletic Trainer's Association (RIATA) is urging coaches, parents and athletes to learn more about heat illness, its symptoms and treatment. In an effort to education the public on heat illness, the National Athletic Trainers Association along with the National Safe Kids Campaign sponsored a taskforce to identify key components of understanding heat illness. This task force was comprised of experts from various medical and allied health care professions.

The "Parents and Coaches Guide to Dehydration and Heat Illness in Children" can be found at <http://www.nata.org/fpfiles/links/heatillness2.htm>. This guide outlines the 3 major types of heat illness and identifies signs, symptoms and treatments for each. It also includes helpful hints for parents and coaches on preventing heat illness, when to have fluid breaks during practice and guidelines on when an athlete should return to practice following heat illness.

The Rhode Island Athletic Trainers' Association urges everyone involved with sports to learn more about heat illness to create a safe and fun atmosphere for all kids. For more information, please visit the RIATA website at www.riathletictrainers.org or the NATA website at www.nata.org.