

Safety Tip of the Month – June 2007
VSI Safety Committee
“Staying Hydrated or Getting Dehydrated at Swim Meets!”

With the summer long course season now in full swing, we need to remember several things about dehydration and proper hydration.

- Swimmers can lose water through the skin (sweating) when in the water.
- Thirst is not always the first sign of dehydration.
- Dehydration may occur at the winter swim meets as well, based on the temperature and humidity of the surrounding air in the pool.
- Swimmers are not the only one who can become dehydrated at swim meets. Coaches, officials, timers and spectators need proper hydration as well.

Ways to stay properly hydrated at swim meets include:

- Drink lots of **water** the night before and the morning of the meet.
- Try to drink at least one cup of water (250-500 mls) at least every hour or more. If it is very hot or you are exerting yourself continuously you will need even more.
- When replacing fluids it is best to start with water. However, after every second glass of water it is important to drink a glass of electrolyte solution (e.g. *Gatorade*, *Pedialyte*), or other non-carbonated non-caffeinated drink with a bit of sodium, potassium, chloride, and bicarbonate.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine or other stimulants. These elements also act as mild diuretics, and you will end up losing body water through your kidneys.
- During a swim meet, the host team should have one or more persons distribute water to the coaches, timers, and wet and dry deck officials at least every 45 minutes.

The initial signs of dehydration may be very subtle and easily missed by the most observant parent, friend or coach. Signs of dehydration include:

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| • Faster heart rate | • Difficulty concentrating |
| • Slower reaction time | • Headache |
| • Faster breathing | • Very dry mucous membranes
(especially around the mouth) |
| • Fatigue | • Decrease in the amount of sweating |
| • Nausea | |
| • Increased irritability | |

If any of these signs are seen in an individual, such individual should be encouraged to either sit down and place your head between your legs or lie down in a cool quiet area, and medical help (911) should be summoned. You possibly will need to be evaluated at the nearest medical facility. Severe dehydration will require intravenous fluid repletion.

**BY TAKING PROACTIVE STEPS YOU CAN STAY WELL HYDRATED AND NOT BECOME
DEHYDRATED AT SWIM MEETS!**