

Safety Tip of the Month – July 2010
VSI Safety Committee
“Staying Hydrated a Must”

With the summer long course season now in full swing, we need to remember several things about dehydration and proper hydration. Staying properly hydrated is a must at practices or meets. However, dehydration can occur in the winter as well as in the summer. It is often associated with very hot, outside heat, but may occur in indoor venues in the middle of winter, as well.

- Fluid losses can occur from stimulation of kidney excretion of fluid, which occurs with coffee, tea, and other products containing caffeine.
- If someone has been very ill and had diarrhea or vomiting, this will quickly lead to dehydration.
- Drinking *Gatorade* or sodas all day, without any free water, can lead to dehydration.
- Alcohol, such as beer, wine, and higher proof liquor, acts as a strong diuretic, resulting in increased urine output and a marked decrease in intravascular volume
- Young women having their period (menses) may result in significant fluid loss that, if coupled with a very hot summer day and / or many sodas containing caffeine, could readily lead to dehydration.
- 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 cup of water it is important to drink a cup of electrolyte solution (e.g. *Gatorade*, *Powerade*, *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 and Symptoms of Dehydration Include:

- Faster heart rate
- Lower blood pressure
- Pale skin color
- Cooler hands and feet
- Very dark yellow / brown urine
- Longer times in between voiding
- Slower reaction time
- Faster breathing
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Increased irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Headache
- Very dry mucous membranes (especially around the mouth)
- Decrease in the amount of sweating
- Feeling dizzy
- Inability to concentrate
- Blurred vision at times

If any of these signs or symptoms 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. Treatment of dehydration included rehydration, starting with one to two glasses of water, followed by one glass of concentrated clear liquids such as: Pedialyte. Severe dehydration will require intravenous fluid repletion.

BY TAKING PROACTIVE STEPS YOU CAN STAY WELL HYDRATED AND NOT BECOME DEHYDRATED!