

Hot Weather Guidelines

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke	1
	Dehydration	1
	Heat exhaustion	1
	Heat stroke	1
3	Recommended preventative strategies	2
	Hydration	2
	Timing of games and training.....	2
	Player rest and rotation	2
	Clothing	2
	To summarise.....	2
	Attachment 1	4
	Softball Australia Hot Weather Checklist	4
	Recommended Guidelines.....	5



1 Introduction

- 1.1 Softball is a summer sport and it is therefore inevitable some games will be scheduled for play during extreme heat conditions. All officials, coaches, managers and umpires owe a duty of care to players and officials and should take all reasonable steps to minimise foreseeable risks which may result in injury or damage.
- 1.2 High intensity exercise in a hot environment, with associated fluid loss and elevated body temperature, can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke is a potentially fatal condition and must be treated immediately by a medical professional.
- 1.3 To assist organisations and individuals when considering their duty of care responsibilities, Sports Medicine Australia – South Australia (**SMA SA**) has produced guidelines and a checklist for reference, which Softball Australia has used to develop these guidelines.
- 1.4 The guidelines are not binding. SMA SA and Softball Australia urge all parties to use common sense and to act responsibly when running an event.
- 1.5 Cancellation of games may be appropriate even in circumstances falling outside these guidelines.

2 Dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke

Dehydration

- 2.1 Fluid loss occurs during exercise, mainly due to perspiration and respiration. It makes an athlete more susceptible to fatigue and muscle cramps. Inadequate fluid replacement before, during and after exercise will lead to excessive dehydration and may lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion

- 2.2 Dehydration can lead to heat exhaustion, symptoms include:
 - Fatigue, high heart rate, light-headedness, dizziness, headache, loss of endurance and skills, confusion and nausea
 - Athletes will pass little urine, which will be highly concentrated
 - Cramps may be associated with dehydration.

Heat stroke

- 2.3 Severe dehydration may lead to heat stroke. Symptoms are similar to heat exhaustion with the addition of dry skin, confusion and collapse.
- 2.4 An athlete may suffer from heat stroke even though they have not been identified as suffering from heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke can still occur even in the presence of good hydration.
- 2.5 Heat stroke is a potentially fatal condition and must be treated immediately by a medical professional.



3 Recommended preventative strategies

Hydration

- 3.1 Drink at least 500mls (2-3 glasses) before an activity.
- 3.2 Drink 200mls (1-2 glasses) every 15 minutes during activity, preferably water however diluted cordial or sports drinks may be appropriate.
- 3.3 Drink at least 500mls after an activity.

Timing of games and training

- 3.4 Where possible, avoid scheduling training and matches during the hottest part of the day (usually between 11am and 3pm, or noon and 4pm during daylight saving time).
- 3.5 Early morning or night games minimise the likelihood of unacceptable playing conditions.

Player rest and rotation

- 3.6 Consider using substitutions more often during play.
- 3.7 Ensure all dugouts are equipped with shade and fluids for appropriate rest, recovery and hydration when a team is batting.
- 3.8 Team managers and coaches should be especially vigilant and monitor players' physical condition in extreme temperatures.

Clothing

- 3.9 It is essential that everyone is made aware of the importance of:
 - 3.9.1 Wearing appropriate clothing during play
 - 3.9.2 Wearing hats or visors whilst on the field
 - 3.9.3 Appropriate application and re-application of SPF 30+ sunscreen
 - 3.9.4 The use of wet towels
 - 3.9.5 Sunglasses.

To summarise

- 3.10 In extreme heat conditions:
 - 3.10.1 The welfare of players and umpires is paramount
 - 3.10.2 On days of extreme heat coaches, players, umpires and officials should be aware of the possible risks and carefully monitor all participants. If any show signs of heat distress, swift and appropriate action must be taken
 - 3.10.3 Be aware that junior players are more susceptible to heat injury, especially those doubling up in senior competitions on the same day as their junior games
 - 3.10.4 Ensure there are sufficient shaded areas at grounds for both players and spectators
 - 3.10.5 Ensure there are qualified first aiders at the ground
 - 3.10.6 Consider cancelling or postponing scheduled games.



- 3.10.7 Associations and clubs should reserve the right to cancel all play when extreme temperatures are forecast. Local rules should include a time for notifying participants of the cancellation of the day's games.

The *Hot Weather Guidelines Checklist* (Attachment 1) will assist in decision-making.

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The information in this guideline is of a general nature only and is not intended to be relied upon as, nor as a substitute for, specific professional advice. No responsibility for the loss occasioned to any person acting on or refraining from action as a result of any material in this guideline can be accepted.



Attachment 1

Softball Australia Hot Weather Checklist

This checklist will help you determine whether to commence or continue play in hot weather conditions. Allocate a score for each item – if in doubt err on the side of caution and apply a higher score. Some categories may not be applicable to your circumstance, in which case use your best judgment.

1	Wet bulb globe temperature¹ (or equivalent)	7	Time between available drinks	
	<18 degrees	12	Less than 15 minutes	2
	18 to 22 degrees	10	15 to 25 minutes	4
	23 to 28 degrees	14	25 to 35 minutes	6
	Above 28 degrees	20	35 to 45 minutes	8
			45 minutes plus	10
2	Overall duration of event	8	Time of the event	
	Less than 30 minutes	2	Before 9am	2
	30 to 60 minutes	4	After dark	2
	60 minutes to 2 hours	6	9am till 11am	5
	Greater than 2 hours	8	3pm till sunset	5
			11am to 3pm	10
3	Individual intensity during the event	9	Surface type	
	Easy pace throughout	2	Water	1
	Moderate pace, breaks in intensity	4	Grass	2
	Moderate pace throughout	6	Boards	4
	Sustained effort with some breaks	8	Sand	6
	Sustained effort throughout	10	Synthetic surface	6
			Asphalt	8
4	Acclimatisation of participants	10	Venue	
	Used to hot weather conditions	2	Indoor air conditioning	1
	Used to warm weather conditions	5	Indoor no air conditioning	4
	Used to cool/cold conditions	8	Outdoor	8
5	Athletic ability of individuals	11	Other predisposed medical conditions of participants	
	Elite fitness levels	2	No	0
	Good fitness level	6	Yes	6
	Moderate fitness levels	6		
	Low fitness levels	8		
6	Age of participants	12	Other factors to consider	
	18 to 30	2	Shade available during breaks	Yes/No
	13 to 17	5	Water freely available at venue	Yes/No
	30 to 40	5	Sports trainer/first aid person on site	Yes/No
	Over 40	8	Body fat of individual participants	High/Low
	Under 13	8		

¹ To obtain the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature or equivalent, required to complete the checklist, please refer to your State or Territory [Bureau of Meteorology](#).



Recommended Guidelines

Point Score

- Above 75** Softball Australia and SMA SA recommend you take appropriate preventative strategies to ensure the welfare of players, coaches and officials
- 66 to 74** Softball Australia and SMA SA recommend you take appropriate preventative strategies to ensure the welfare of players, coaches and officials if:
- The Wet Bulb Globe Temp (or equivalent) is above 28 or
 - The age of the participants gets a point value of 8
 - If this is not the case and the event goes on then:
 - Extra drink breaks should be allowed
 - Shade should be provided
 - Promotion of fluid replacement should be actively encouraged by coaches, umpires and PA announcements
- 56 to 65** Softball Australia and SMA SA recommend play may go ahead BUT
- Extra drink breaks should be allowed
 - Shade should be provided
 - Promotion of fluid replacement should be actively encouraged by coaches, umpires and PA announcements
- 55 and below** Softball Australia and SMA SA recommend play with usual fluid replacement measures in place

Softball Australia and SMA SA reminds sporting groups and individuals that:

- Cancellation of events or withdrawal from participation may be appropriate even in circumstances falling outside of these recommendations.
- Individuals can use the guidelines and point scores to ascertain whether they should be involved in a particular event.