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U.S. SOCCER FEDERATION ISSUES GUIDELINES TO PREVENT DANGEROUS HEAT ILLNESS IN YOUNG PLAYERS

Key to Prevention is Being Sure Children Drink Enough Fluids

CHICAGO – May 8, 2002 – Children are more susceptible to heat illness than adults. With this in mind and summer heat approaching, the U.S. Soccer Federation – the governing body of all soccer in the United States – has taken a leadership role to develop and distribute Youth Soccer Heat Stress Guidelines for youth coaches and parents.

The goal is to help prevent the potentially deadly effects of heat illness among the 14 million U.S. children who play soccer.

The guidelines provide coaches with an overview of the latest research and information regarding: 1) the physiological factors and soccer-specific factors that place young athletes at risk for heat illness, 2) heat illness prevention techniques and 3) the signs and symptoms of dehydration and heat illness.

“As a US Soccer coach for more than 20 years, I think it’s critical to educate coaches, parents and young players about heat illness, which is the most preventable sports injury,” said John Ellinger, head coach, U.S. Under-17 Men’s National Soccer Team.

To ensure the key points from the guidelines are memorable for coaches, parents and kids, the U.S. Soccer Federation has developed the acronym – G.O.A.L. – which stands for:

- Get acclimated – active kids' (and adults') bodies need time to gradually adapt to increased exposure to high temperatures and humidity. During this eight to 10-day acclimation process, it’s especially important for kids to drink enough fluids.

- On a schedule, drink up – thirst isn't an accurate indicator of fluid needs. Young athletes should be encouraged to drink on a schedule or at regular intervals before they become thirsty.

- Always bring a Gatorade – especially during games and practices in the heat, replacing electrolytes and providing energy is crucial to keeping kids safe and going strong to enjoy their games.

- Learn the warning signs of dehydration and heat illness – if someone becomes fatigued, dizzy, nauseous or has a headache during exercise in the heat, have them stop, rest and drink fluids. Seek medical attention if symptoms persist.

Fluid Guidelines

As one of the best means to preventing heat illness, The U.S. Soccer Federation recommends parents and coaches ensure children are well hydrated before practice and games. During activity, young athletes should drink on a schedule – before they feel thirsty – and consume five to nine ounces of fluid every 20 minutes (a child who weighs less than 90 lbs. needs five ounces of fluid and a child weighing more than 90 lbs. needs nine ounces of fluid).

“It’s crucial that kids drink enough fluids before, during and after activity,” said Oded Bar-Or, MD, a contributor to the development of the guidelines and professor of pediatrics and director of the Children’s Exercise and Nutrition Centre at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. “Research we conducted shows that when drinking plain water, children don’t drink enough to avoid dehydration. Compared to water, kids will drink 90 percent more of a flavored sports drink with electrolytes like Gatorade to fully rehydrate. It’s important parents and coaches have these types of fluids available for children during activity.”

The U.S. Soccer Federation Youth Heat Stress Guidelines were developed under the consultation of Oded Bar-Or, MD, professor of pediatrics and director of the Children’s Exercise and Nutrition Centre at McMaster University and Bill Prentice, PhD, PT, ATC, professor of exercise and sports science and trainer for women’s soccer at the University of North Carolina.

The U.S. Soccer Federation plans to incorporate the Youth Soccer Heat Stress Guidelines into its coaches’ curriculum that will reach thousands of youth soccer coaches across the country.

Founded in 1913, U.S. Soccer is one of the world's first organizations to be affiliated with FIFA, the Federation Internationale de Football Association, soccer's world governing body. As the governing body of soccer in all its forms in the United States, U.S. Soccer has helped chart the course for the sport in the USA for 88 years. In that time, the Federation's mission statement has been very simple and very clear: to make soccer, in all its forms, a preeminent sport in the United States and to continue the development of soccer at all recreational and competitive levels. For additional information about the U.S. Soccer Federation, please visit its web site at www.ussoccer.com.

<http://www.ussoccer.com/news/fullstory.sps?iNewsid=15608>