

# National Athletic Trainers' Association Pre-Season Heat Acclimatization Guideline for Secondary School Athletes

NJSIAA and Middletown School District Athletics follow the pre-season heat acclimatization guide for all fall sports:

The **heat-acclimatization period** is defined as the initial 14 consecutive days of preseason practice for all student-athletes. The goal of the acclimatization period is to enhance exercise heat tolerance and the ability to exercise safely and effectively in warm to hot conditions. This period should begin on the first day of practice or conditioning before the regular season. Any practices or conditioning conducted before this time should not be considered a part of the heat acclimatization period. Regardless of the conditioning program and conditioning status leading up to the first formal practice, *all student-athletes (including those who arrive at preseason practice after the first day of practice) should follow the 14-day heat-acclimatization plan.* During the preseason heat acclimatization period, **if practice occurs on 6 consecutive days, student-athletes should have 1 day of complete rest (no conditioning, walk-throughs, practices, etc).** During this time, athletes may not participate in more than one practice per day including outside organization practices, additional sport or conditioning related physical activity.

**Days on which athletes do not practice due to a scheduled rest day, injury, or illness do not count toward the heat-acclimatization period.** For example, an athlete who sits out the third and fourth days of practice during this time (eg, Wednesday and Thursday) will resume practice as if on day 3 of the heat-acclimatization period when returning to play on Friday.

A **practice** is defined as the period of time a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school approved, **sport- or conditioning-related physical activity**. Each individual practice should last no more than 3 hours. Warm-up, stretching, and cool-down activities are included as part of the 3- hour practice time. Regardless of ambient temperature conditions, all conditioning and weight room activities should be considered part of practice.

A **walk-through** is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes not wearing protective equipment (eg, helmets, shoulder pads, catcher's gear, shin guards) or using other sport-related equipment (eg, footballs, lacrosse sticks, blocking sleds, pitching machines, soccer balls, marker cones). The walk-through is not part of the 3-hour practice period, can last no more than 1 hour per day, and does not include conditioning or weight-room activities.

A **recovery period** is defined as the time between the end of 1 practice or walk-through and the beginning of the next practice or walk-through. During this time, athletes should rest in a cool environment, with no sport- or conditioning-related activity permitted (eg, speed or agility drills, strength training, conditioning, or walk-through). Treatment with the athletic trainer is permissible.

## **Note:**

During days 1–2 of the heat-acclimatization period, in sports requiring helmets or shoulder pads, a helmet should be the only protective equipment permitted (goalies, as in the case of field hockey and related sports, should not wear full protective gear or perform activities that would require protective equipment). During days 3–5, only helmets and shoulder pads should be worn. Beginning on day 6, all protective equipment may be worn and full contact may begin.

A. Football only: On days 3–5, contact with blocking sleds and tackling dummies may be initiated.

B. Full-contact sports: 100% live contact drills should begin no earlier than day 6.