

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Play safe this summer with St John**

Dehydration is one of the easiest conditions to prevent yet every year, particularly during hot summer months, St John treat tens of thousands of people for serious heat-related illness.

With the summer heat set to send temperatures soaring across the country St John is urging all Australians, particularly children, to take special care by preventing dehydration.

“There are many heat-related issues Australians should understand before playing sports or other activities.

“In the heat dehydration is really common, not only in adults but in kids,” said Robyn Galwey, General Manager-Training, St John (NSW).

“Kids dehydrate without you even noticing. Even a few extra moments in the sun can lead to dehydration and heat exhaustion as we tend to spend more time outdoors in summer.”

There are several physiological factors that make children more vulnerable to heat-related illness than adults.

- Children absorb more heat from a hot environment because they have a greater skin surface-area to body-mass (weight) ratio than adults – the smaller the child, the faster the heat is absorbed.
- Children are not able to cool down as much as adults do through sweating<sup>1</sup>.
- Children produce more metabolic heat during physical activity<sup>1</sup>.
- Children do not drink enough water to stay properly hydrated during exercise<sup>2</sup>.

“Drinking enough fluid is the best defense against heat illness because dehydration is the first warning sign of more serious heat-related conditions like heat exhaustion and heat stroke,” said Ms. Galwey.

“It is important to drink on a schedule, before, during, and after activity in order to replace what has been lost through sweating and evaporation. The following fluid guidelines help ensure that enough fluids are being taken in to stay hydrated without overdrinking.”



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St John advises the following guidelines for children:

<b>WHEN</b>	<b>KIDS &lt; 41 kg</b>	<b>KIDS &gt; 41 kg</b>
1 hour before activity <sup>3</sup>	90-180 ml of fluid	180-360 ml of fluid
During activity, every 20 minutes <sup>4</sup>	90-150 ml of fluid	180-270 ml of fluid
After activity, to replace fluids lost through sweat <sup>3</sup>	Up to 240 ml of fluid, per 250g of weight lost*	Up to 360 ml of fluid, per 250g of weight lost*

For Adults:

<b>WHEN</b>	<b>ADULTS</b>
Two to three hours before activity <sup>3</sup>	500-600 ml of fluid
During activity, every 15 minutes <sup>3</sup>	200-300 ml of fluid
After activity, to replace fluids lost through sweat <sup>3</sup>	At least 600 ml of fluid per 500g of weight lost*

\* To determine how much fluid you lose from sweat during exercise, weigh yourself before and after the workout. To maintain optimal hydration your weight should be the same before and after exercise.

*Easy tip: Learn to drink for individual needs. One kid-sized gulp typically equals 15 ml of fluids and one adult gulp typically equals 30 ml of fluids.*

Dehydration places adults and children at risk for serious conditions like heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Common warning signs of dehydration and heat illness include<sup>5</sup>:

- Thirst
- Irritability
- Weakness
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Muscle Cramps
- Fatigue
- Loss of Performance
- Dark-Coloured Urine / Decreased Urine Volume

“While many people believe these conditions are to be expected throughout the summer months, they can be very dangerous and often need medical attention. It is important to know how to recognise and symptoms and treat the problem,” said Ms. Galwey.

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## **What are the best fluids to drink during activity?**

Studies show that when drinking water, kids will drink only about 50 per cent of what they need. To help children drink enough fluid to fully replace what they have lost through sweat, research suggests that a lightly flavoured sports drink with a small amount of sodium, like Gatorade, encourages them to drink more than water to stay better hydrated<sup>6</sup>.

The “**ABCs**” are an easy way to remember how to beat the heat so everyone can play safe:

- **A**lways drink before, during, and after activity to replace what you’ve lost in sweat.
- **B**ring the right fluids. Research shows sports drinks like Gatorade hydrate best.<sup>3</sup>
- **C**onsider fluids as part of essential safety equipment for sport.

## **What other steps can be taken to safeguard against dehydration?**

The increased levels of activity and sweating that come with sports, along with other factors, put active people at particular risk for heat illness. Here are some simple steps that make prevention possible:

- During vigorous activity or all-day sporting events, make sure there is enough time to rest, drink fluids and take time in the shade.
- Make sure clothing is light-coloured and loose fitting.
- Be especially cautious during games like football and basketball that require almost constant movement.
- Go to activities with fluids in hand.

St John first aid courses are designed to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to deal with a first aid situation. To book a course or to get your first aid kit up to date call St John on 1300 360 455.

For more information on St John (NSW) first aid courses, kits and products call 1300 360 455 or visit [www.stjohnnsw.com.au](http://www.stjohnnsw.com.au)

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References:

- <sup>1</sup> Bar-Or, O. Temperature regulation during exercise in children and adolescents. In: Gisolfi C, Lamb DR, eds. Perspectives in Exercise and Sports Medicine, II. Youth, Exercise and Sport. Indianapolis, IN: Benchmark Press; 1989, 335-367.
- <sup>2</sup> Rivera-Brown A., et al. Drink composition, voluntary drinking and fluid balance in exercising, trained, heat-acclimatized boys. *J Appl Phys* 86: 78-84, 1999.
- <sup>3</sup> Adapted from the 2000 National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Fluid Replacement for Athletes, *J Athletic Training* 35(2): 212-224, 2000.
- <sup>4</sup> Adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics Position Statement, *Pediatrics* 106: 158-159, 2000.
- <sup>5</sup> Casa, D.J. et al. National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Fluid Replacement for Athletes. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 35 (2): 212-224, 2000.
- <sup>6</sup> Wilk B. and O. Bar-Or. Effect of drink flavor and NaCl on voluntary drinking and hydration in boys exercising in the heat. *J Appl Physiol*, 80: 1112-1117, 1996.