

NEWS

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**Volunteer coaches may be endangering youngsters in hot-weather sports.

DALLAS--Some coaches still hold on to the old take-'em-to-the-desert-and-make-'em-tough philosophy as youngsters around the country are returning to late summer and fall sports practice, says Dr. Charles Ginsburg. In actuality, restricting fluid intake can be life-threatening.

Although most professional coaches have now been educated to the hazards of dehydration and heatstroke, many volunteers are still enforcing the old rules they grew up under as athletes themselves, he says. Ginsburg, associate professor of Pediatrics at UT Southwestern Medical School and medical director at Children's Medical Center, has coached girls' soccer for several years.

"Unfortunately, too many coaches still believe that 'if you drink, you get sick.' I'm appalled that there are parents, particularly fathers, still restricting access to water."

The pediatrician says it's very important for active young people to have free access to water or other fluids. In hot weather young athletes should be primed with water before games and practices begin. During breaks and timeouts they should be allowed to drink and cool off with water.

In fact, he says all children should be given free and easy access to fluids when they are active in hot weather. Ginsburg suggests putting a water jug on the sidelines or in the backyard and letting the kids decide when and how much to drink. It's also important to remember that playing baseball or soccer or just running around the backyard can subject youngsters to heatstroke or heat exhaustion.

Another thing to keep in mind about children and hot weather -- whether in spring, summer or fall -- is that infants do not have the same ability to dissipate heat as do older children.

"Of course, you should not leave a child unattended in a car any time," says Ginsburg. "But leaving a child in a car in hot weather has special dangers."

The pediatrician says a locked automobile can quickly become a veritable oven with temperatures rising to 150 degrees. And leaving the window open a crack does little good because the window must be at least 50 percent open to make a difference in heat dissipation.

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NOTE: Dr. Ginsburg will become professor of Pediatrics September 1.

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