



Lakeland Highlands Hospital

Orlando Health and Watson Clinic Share Heat Safety Guidance with Polk County Schools

Athletic Directors, Coaches and Physical Education Teachers Participate in Training Ahead of School Year

Lakeland, FL (August 8, 2025) – As the new school year begins next week, Orlando Health and Watson Clinic provided a heat safety education session for faculty and staff of Polk County Schools. More than 150 athletic directors, coaches, and physical education teachers attended the program, which focused on recognizing and preventing heat-related illnesses among student athletes.

“We value the opportunity to educate our community on the importance of heat safety,” shared Dawn Willis, Community Relations Manager, Orlando Health. “Polk County Schools is taking meaningful steps to equip its athletic leaders with the knowledge and tools they need to protect students not just during Florida’s hottest months but year-round.”

Florida leads the nation in reported heat-related illnesses, with heat-related deaths rising over the past three years. Student athletes are especially vulnerable to Exertional Heat Illness (EHI) during early-season training. However, risks can be significantly reduced by following Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) guidelines, ensuring adequate hydration, scheduling frequent rest breaks, and incorporating proper recovery techniques like stretching, cold water immersion, nutrition, and sleep.

“Training in Florida’s extreme heat requires careful planning and real-time decision making,” shared Dr. Jarett Gregory, Watson Clinic Urgent Care South. “Knowing how to modify workouts and recognize the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke can make a life-saving difference.”

Heat safety tips shared included:

- **Signs of Heat Exhaustion:** dizziness, irritability, nausea, fainting, and pale, clammy skin
- **Signs of Heat Stroke:** hot, red skin (often without sweating), confusion, seizures, and unconsciousness

Dr. Gregory emphasized the importance of immediate action when symptoms appear. For suspected heat exhaustion, move individuals to a cool location, encourage hydration and rest and monitor closely. If symptoms worsen or do not improve within an hour, seek medical attention. In cases of heat stroke, call 911 immediately.

Dr. Jarett Gregory is a board-certified Internal Medicine and Pediatrics physician who treats patients from Watson Clinic Urgent Care South, which is located in south Lakeland behind the Oakbridge Plaza. At this location and other Watson Clinic walk-in care facilities, patients can receive immediate care without an appointment.

This educational initiative is one of many collaborative efforts between Orlando Health and Watson Clinic, who announced their combined efforts for Orlando Health Watson Clinic Lakeland Highlands Hospital earlier this year. The Hospital, scheduled to open in Summer 2026, leverages the strengths of both organizations to enhance access to quality care across Florida's heartland.

About Orlando Health

Orlando Health is a private not-for-profit, integrated academic healthcare system with \$14 billion of assets under management, that serves the southeastern United States – including Florida and Alabama – and Puerto Rico. With corporate offices in Orlando, Florida the system provides a complete continuum of care across a network of medical centers and institutes, community and specialty hospitals, physician practices, urgent care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, home healthcare, and long-term and behavioral health care services. Founded more than 100 years ago, Orlando Health's mission is to improve the health and the quality of life of the individuals and communities we serve. The system provided nearly \$1.7 billion in community impact in the form of community benefit programs and services, Medicare shortfalls, bad debt, community-building activities and capital investments in FY 23, the most

recent period for which the information is available. For more information, visit orlandohealth.com, or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X](#).

About Watson Clinic: As one of the largest multispecialty medical clinics in the southeast, Watson Clinic provides comprehensive healthcare services to residents of Lakeland and surrounding communities. First established in 1941, Watson Clinic has grown to include over 200 board-certified physicians representing more than 40 medical and surgical specialties. The Clinic is proud to deliver quality healthcare to every generation from our Main Clinic location at 1600 Lakeland Hills Boulevard in Lakeland, as well as 19 additional convenient locations throughout Polk, Pasco and Hillsborough counties. More information is available at www.WatsonClinic.com, or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X](#).

