

# The Hydration Safe Tampa Guide

Heat safety for Tampa Bay families · Reviewed by Jones M. King, MD, Emergency Medicine

***Know the signs. Know when to hydrate. Know when to get help.***

Florida heat isn't seasonal — it's a way of life. From back-to-school sports practices to Gasparilla, hurricane cleanup, and everyday time outdoors, dehydration and heat illness affect Tampa Bay families all year. This guide answers three questions clearly: what are the early signs, what can you safely manage at home, and when do symptoms need medical care — or 911?

## 1

### Dehydration Warning Signs

#### EARLY SIGNS — act now: rest, shade, fluids, cooling

- Thirst, dry mouth, or sticky saliva
- Darker urine, or urinating less than usual
- Headache, fatigue, or irritability
- Dizziness when standing · muscle cramps

#### IN BABIES & YOUNG CHILDREN

- No wet diaper for 3+ hours
- Crying with few or no tears
- Sunken eyes; in infants, a sunken soft spot
- Unusual sleepiness or floppiness

#### CONCERNING SIGNS — seek medical care

- Very dark urine, or little to no urine for 8+ hours
- Dizziness that doesn't improve with rest and fluids · rapid heartbeat or breathing
- Confusion, unusual behavior, or extreme lethargy · fainting
- Vomiting that prevents keeping fluids down

## 2

### Heat Exhaustion vs. Heat Stroke

Knowing the difference can save a life

#### HEAT EXHAUSTION — serious. Act immediately.

**Signs:** heavy sweating · cool, pale, clammy skin · weakness · nausea · headache · dizziness · fast but weak pulse.  
*Feels awful but thinks clearly.*

**Do this:** Stop activity. Move somewhere cool. Loosen clothing. Sip water or an electrolyte drink. Cool with wet cloths or a cool shower. **Get medical help** if vomiting, worsening, or lasting more than 1 hour.

### HEAT STROKE — CALL 911. Every minute matters.

**Signs:** temperature 103°F+ · hot, red skin (dry or damp) · **confusion, slurred speech, strange behavior** · strong rapid pulse · collapse or seizure.

**Do this:** Call 911. Move to shade or A/C. Cool aggressively — cool water, wet cloths, ice packs to neck, armpits, and groin — while waiting for EMS. **Never give fluids to anyone confused or unconscious.**

**THE RULE OF THUMB:** Feels terrible but thinks clearly → heat exhaustion. The mind changes → heat stroke → 911.

## 3 When Hydration Isn't Enough

### GO TO THE ER OR CALL 911 IF SOMEONE HAS:

- Confusion, disorientation, or unusual behavior · fainting or seizure
- Temperature of 103°F or higher · chest pain or trouble breathing
- Persistent vomiting — can't keep any fluids down
- No urination for many hours despite fluids
- Severe symptoms in an infant, older adult, or someone with heart disease, kidney disease, or diabetes

Home fluids, rest, and cooling are for **mild** symptoms only. NobleMed IV provides wellness hydration services — and these situations are the wrong choice for them. They need an emergency department. Part of being honest about hydration is being honest about our limits. **When in doubt, choose the ER.**

## 4 Before Sports & Outdoor Activities

- **Start hydrated.** Drink water all day before practice — the body can't catch up mid-activity. Pale yellow urine is the simple check.
- **During activity,** drink on a schedule, not on thirst — a water break every 15–20 minutes in Florida heat.
- **Water vs. electrolytes:** water for activity under an hour; electrolyte drinks for longer, intense, or heavy-sweat sessions.
- **Check the heat index,** not just the temperature — humidity keeps sweat from evaporating.
- **Watch each other.** The person developing heat stroke often can't recognize it in themselves.
- **Skip energy drinks** for kids and anyone exerting in heat; alternate alcohol with water at outdoor events.

## 5 Youth Athletes: What Florida Law Requires

Exertional heat stroke is a leading cause of sudden death in high school athletes

After a Fort Myers high school football player died of heat stroke following a 2017 summer workout, Florida passed the **Zachary Martin Act**. Every FHSAA member school must monitor heat stress at outdoor practices and games using wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT), modify or cancel activity when readings are too high, and keep cooling equipment — including cold-water immersion tubs — and AEDs on site. FHSAA policy also

requires a phased **14-day acclimatization period** at the start of every season. If an athlete shows confusion or collapses in the heat, the standard is **cool first, transport second**.

### FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD'S COACH OR ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

- How is heat stress (WBGT) monitored at practices, and who decides when activity is modified?
- Where is the cold-water immersion tub or cooling station, and is ice stocked at every practice?
- Who on staff is trained to recognize heat stroke and cool an athlete before EMS transport?
- Is the emergency action plan posted, and has it been reviewed with local EMS this year?
- How is the 14-day acclimatization period handled for athletes joining the team late?

## 6

### Who's Most at Risk in the Heat

Check on friends, neighbors, and relatives — especially anyone without air conditioning

- **Infants and young children** — their bodies adapt to heat less effectively, and they depend on others to keep them cool and hydrated.
- **Older adults** — especially with pre-existing conditions, certain medications, limited mobility, or living alone.
- **People with chronic conditions** such as heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes, or respiratory illness.
- **Pregnant women** — extreme heat has been associated with preterm birth, low birth weight, and other adverse outcomes.

### NEVER LEAVE A CHILD, DISABLED PERSON, OR PET IN A CAR

- Not for a minute, not with windows cracked, not even in winter — a closed car can turn deadly in as little as 10 minutes.
- Lock parked cars at home, even in your own driveway — toddlers can climb in to play and become trapped.
- In Florida, hot-car tragedies are reported from April into December — track the data at [noheatstroke.org](http://noheatstroke.org).

## 7

### Know Today's Heat Risk in Tampa Bay

Local alert criteria from the National Weather Service office in Ruskin

#### EXTREME HEAT WATCH

Issued 2–3 days ahead when the heat index could reach 113°F+. Time to plan: reschedule outdoor activity, check on at-risk neighbors.

#### HEAT ADVISORY

Heat index expected between 108–112°F. Limit midday exertion, add water and shade breaks, watch for early warning signs.

#### EXTREME HEAT WARNING

Heat index expected to reach 113°F+. Dangerous — move activity indoors or cancel it. Never leave anyone in a car.

Even without an official alert, Tampa Bay summers routinely feel like 100–107°F. Check the 7-day heat index forecast before outdoor plans: [weather.gov/tbw/dailyheatindex](http://weather.gov/tbw/dailyheatindex)

**Tampa Bay forecasts & alerts**

- 7-day heat index forecast — [weather.gov/tbw/dailyheatindex](https://weather.gov/tbw/dailyheatindex)
- NWS Tampa Bay hazards — [weather.gov/tbw](https://weather.gov/tbw)
- FL heat-illness data (FL DOH) — [floridatracking.com](https://floridatracking.com)

**Youth sports & schools**

- AAP: young athletes in hot weather — [healthychildren.org](https://healthychildren.org)
- CDC: heat and athletes — [cdc.gov/heat-health](https://cdc.gov/heat-health)
- FHSAA heat & weather policies — [fhsaa.com](https://fhsaa.com)
- Free NFHS Heat Illness Prevention course — [nfhslearn.com](https://nfhslearn.com)

**General heat safety**

- CDC: preventing heat illness — [cdc.gov/extreme-heat](https://cdc.gov/extreme-heat)
- NWS heat safety — [weather.gov/safety/heat](https://weather.gov/safety/heat)
- Ready.gov extreme heat — [ready.gov/heat](https://ready.gov/heat)

**Vulnerable groups**

- AAP: children and extreme heat — [healthychildren.org](https://healthychildren.org)
- NIOSH: outdoor workers — [cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress](https://cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress)
- Hot-car data & prevention — [noheatstroke.org](https://noheatstroke.org)

Want the printable quick-reference card for your bag or team group chat? Download the free **Parent & Athlete Hydration Guide** at [website URL].

**Sources & review.** Hydration Safe Tampa materials draw on publicly available guidance from the CDC, CDC/NIOSH, the National Weather Service, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and FHSAA heat policies under Florida's Zachary Martin Act, and are reviewed by Jones M. King, MD, Emergency Medicine.

**Disclaimer.** This guide is general education only and is not medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and is not a substitute for individualized care from a qualified healthcare provider. If you believe someone is experiencing a medical emergency — including possible heat stroke — call 911 immediately.

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