

# **BLACKBURN SOUTH NETBALL CLUB**

## **HEAT POLICY**

**REVIEW DATE: 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy outlines Blackburn South Netball Club's (BSNC) approach to protecting the safety of participants during hot weather. Warm to hot weather creates a risk that participants may experience a form of exertional heat illness, such as muscle cramps, fainting, heat exhaustion and even heat stroke.

The aim of Blackburn South Netball Club's Heat Policy is to:

- Protect the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone who participates, including volunteers, families, coaches and officials.
- Detail strategies for participation to continue with appropriate mitigation and risk management strategies in place.

Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this Policy, please contact the Club via [bsnetballclub@hotmail.com](mailto:bsnetballclub@hotmail.com)

### **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

Blackburn South Netball Club is committed to ensuring our sport is accessible to everyone and we take every opportunity to provide the highest level of service to all members and participants. BSNC has a duty of care to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of participants, during warm to very hot weather and heatwaves. When there is a risk of exertional heat illness, BSNC commits to acting in the best interest of all participants by implementing mitigation strategies.

### **3. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all people involved in our organisation, including committee members, volunteers, coaches, officials, participants, parents and guardians. It covers all activities in which people are physically active. It covers situations where people are inactive yet situated in hot, sunny conditions, such as volunteers, parents, spectators and coaches.

This policy is designed to reduce the risks and prevalence of injury and illness which can occur when people play sport during warm to very hot weather conditions.

#### 4. RECOGNISING EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

Exertional heat illness can be categorised from mild to severe, including muscle cramps, heat syncope (fainting), heat exhaustion, heat injury and heat stroke (life threatening).

Associated signs and symptoms can include:

- Headache.
- Light-headedness and dizziness.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Fatigue.
- Change in personality (disorientation, confusion, irrational behaviour, irritability).
- Change in performance (unsteadiness, loss of balance and coordination, loss of skills).
- Seizures.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Cardiac arrest.

People to whom this policy applies need to be aware that exertional heat illness can occur whenever there are actual or potential environmental, individual and organisational risk factors, and it is in these circumstances that BSNC is committed to reducing the risk of occurrence.

**NOTE:** Exertional heat illness can be life threatening, therefore, if a person is concerned about an immediate risk to an individual's health and safety, the person must phone **"000"** (or **"112"** from a mobile when you are out of your service provider's coverage area) as soon as practicable.

#### 5. RISK FACTORS FOR EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS

BSNC recognises that multiple factors pose a risk to the health and safety of participants, including the environment, factors specific to individuals and factors specific to our sport.

##### **Environmental Risk Factors**

Climate related environmental risk factors can increase the risk of illness and injury. Risk factors include:

- Air temperature.

- Humidity (it becomes more difficult to regulate body temperature in higher humidity due to a decrease in sweat evaporation).
- Wind speed (this affects the rate of water evaporation).
- Radiant temperature (such as radiant heat from ground surface).

### Individual Risk Factors

The following individual risk factors are relevant our participants These factors need to be understood by everyone involved at (insert club name).

- **Age:** Children and adults over 65 are considered at greater risk.
- **Poor physical condition:** Some people may experience heat illness at lower temperatures due to exercising beyond current capacity.
- **Inadequate acclimatization:** This occurs when our body is not conditioned to warm and/or humid climates.
- **Illness or medical conditions:** Individuals may be more affected by heat due to medications and illness.
- **Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances:** Good hydration is needed to keep your body's core temperature down during sport or hot conditions. You must rehydrate to compensate for what the body loses in sweat.

### Sport Risk Factors

Sport risk factors are specific characteristics of the sport activity which can contribute to an increased risk of exertional heat illness. The following risk factors are relevant to netball. Many of these risk factors can be adjusted to reduce some of the risk of exertional heat illness.

- Netball training on asphalt courts in full sun

Risk factors include:

- **Excessive clothing and athletic gear** can increase the risks of the body's core temperature rising.
- **Lack of awareness and education of exertional heat illness**
- **Venue and location.** Surfaces such as asphalt and synthetic turf radiate more heat than water or natural grass. Indoor venues with low air flow or without air conditioning can also present a risk.
- **Level and duration of activities.** The longer the activity and the more intense, the higher the risk.
- **Time of play.** Risks are highest between 11am and sunset.

## **6. MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

The risks of exertional heat illness being suffered by participants can be reduced through a range of mitigation strategies. These strategies can be implemented by everyone. In particular, individuals with a duty of care to participants should consider appropriate mitigation strategies during warm to very hot weather conditions.

BSNC will implement the following sport modification parameters if there is a risk of exertional heat illness to participants.

- Modified training sessions if the temperature is between 30-34.9 degrees
- Cancelling training sessions if the temperature is 35 degrees or above

### **Hydration**

- Promoting hydration strategies including drinking to thirst before, during and after physical activity and reducing intake of sugar sweetened beverages, coffee and alcohol.

### **Water and cooling**

- Encouraging participants to bring additional drinking water
- Encourage participants to bring ice slurry drinks and cold towels

### **Shade**

- Increasing the amount of shade available (by providing portable shelters, encouraging participants, clubs, and teams or families to bring portable shelters)
- Increasing frequency of breaks for participants to take refuge in shaded areas

### **Rescheduling / timing changes**

- Changing the time of the event to a cooler part of the day
- Postponing to future dates
- Increasing frequency and length of breaks
- Shorten duration of games
- Exclude higher intensity activities (sprints, long distance)

### **Rule changes**

- Reducing length of games or activities

- Mandating player rotations
- Mandating rest and drink breaks
- Allowing for appropriate clothing or uniform modifications where required
- Reducing or removing individual or team penalties if they elect not to participate.

## Incidents

- Ensure qualified first aid personnel, are always on site when people are physically active during hot weather
- Monitor players closely and recognise signs and symptoms of exertional heat illness

## 7. ACTIVATING THIS POLICY

This heat policy must be referred to if it is determined by BSNC that there is a risk of exertional heat illnesses during immediate or upcoming matches, games, training sessions, activities, competitions or events.

Climate forecasts are available up to seven days before an event. We will monitor forecast ambient temperatures so that appropriate plans and communications can take place.

BSNC uses the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) as the source of climactic information. All committee members, coaches and officials should ensure they have access to:

- The BoM Weather smartphone app <http://www.bom.gov.au/app/>. This provides information on ambient temperature and Apparent Temperature (AT) which includes air temperature and humidity and appears on smartphone app as e.g. 'feels like 20.1C'.
- The BoM website: Forecast Summary of Victorian Towns  
<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/towns.shtml>

Forecast or current ambient temperature	Actions for consideration
21C-25C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote hydration strategies</li> </ul>
Humidity exceeds 70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure participants have easy access to shade</li> </ul>
26C-30C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote hydration strategies</li> <li>• Ensure participants have easy access to shade</li> </ul>

Humidity exceeds 60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider less intense and shorter duration activities</li> </ul>
30C-34C Humidity exceeds 50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively monitor the health and well-being of all participants</li> <li>Be cautious of over exertion during training</li> <li>Promote hydration strategies and provide additional water</li> <li>Ensure participants have easy access to shade</li> <li>Consider less intense and shorter duration activities</li> <li>Consider postponing to cooler parts of the day</li> </ul>
>35C Humidity exceeds 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Cancellation of training</b></li> </ul>

### **Making decisions**

BSNC Committee & Coaches are responsible for implementing this policy for training sessions. Parents & Care givers should be advised 24 hrs prior to the training session if there is the possibility of a training session needing to be cancelled due to extreme heat. A final decision on whether the training session is to proceed or be cancelled is to be made at least 1hr prior to the training session.

Whitehorse Netball Association (WNA) conducts the Club competitions at Sportlink, Vermont South & follows their own Heat Policy regarding games.

## **8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BSNC PERSONNEL**

Personnel involved in protecting participants from exertional heat illness include the committee members, parents and volunteers. Those people have responsibilities in relation to protection of all members and are expected to:

- Understand the risks of exertional heat illness, as appropriate to their role.
- Appropriately act on any concerns raised by participants about exertional heat illness.

- Know and follow guidelines in relation to the care of all members during warm to very hot weather, and at times of extended periods of exceptionally high day and night-time temperatures (heatwaves).
- Promptly communicate changes through to participants through the most commonly used communication channels at the club – Facebook group, WhatsApp chat groups.

## 9. POLICY PROMOTION

This policy will be made available to all members via the BSNC website

## 10. REVIEW PROCESS

This policy will be reviewed by the BSNC Committee on a biennial basis.

If you would like to provide BSNC with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact the Committee via [bsnetball@hotmail.com](mailto:bsnetball@hotmail.com)

## References

Australian Centre for Research into Injury in Sport and its Prevention (ACRISP), 2017. *Document and content analysis of heat policies and guidelines in Victorian community sport*. Federation University Australia: Ballarat.

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Better Health Channel, 2015. *Heat stress and heat-related illness*. Retrieved from <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/heat-stress-and-heat-related-illness>

Sports Medicine Australia, 2011, *Beat The Heat Fact Sheet*, <https://sma.org.au/sma-site-content/uploads/2017/08/beat-the-heat-2011.pdf>