

# Football players can beat the summer heat by getting ready now

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Getting acclimated to the heat now, before two-a-days begin in August, will help football players avoid cramps, dehydration and other potentially serious injuries that could put a damper on the upcoming season.

"Spending all summer indoors is not a good idea, even if you are lifting weights and getting stronger," said Dr. David Lintner, an [orthopedic surgeon](#) and chief of the Methodist Center for Sports Medicine in Houston. "A big part of the summer conditioning process has to take place outside. Whether it's basketball, running, or working outside, the body needs time to get accustomed to the heat. If players don't get used to the heat, they open themselves up to serious heat illness and, in more serious cases, death."

Since 1995, nearly 40 football players have died due to the heat-related illnesses. According to the American College of [Sports Medicine](#), the majority of serious heat illness occurs in the first four days of summer football practice because most players are not acclimated to the heat, not ready for the intensity of the practice, and not used to wearing the uniform and equipment.

Symptoms of heat illness include nausea, vomiting, incoherence, fatigue, muscle cramps, weakness and [vision problems](#). When the body temperature climbs to 103 or 104, the brain's [hypothalamus](#), the portion responsible for the function of the [peripheral nervous system](#), can no longer stop the heat. To compensate, the heart beats faster to increase blood flow to the skin. This takes blood from the heart and other

muscles. At a temperature of 106, [brain death](#) occurs.

"If your first introduction to the heat is when you put on your pads and start hitting, you're not going to have the endurance, the strength or the concentration you need to succeed. Not properly preparing for the heat could set you back three weeks," said Lintner, who is also team physician for the Houston Texans and Houston Astros.

Lintner adds that creatine and other muscle-building substances have been known to cause dehydration, [muscle cramps](#) and reduced blood volume and, needless to say, can severely hinder the athlete's ability to handle the heat. It's best to stay away from these types of substances, he said.

"You can get acclimated to the heat by starting off with 20 minutes a day and gradually work up to an hour," Lintner said. "Taking a little time every day will make preparing for the upcoming season much more enjoyable and successful."

Provided by Methodist Hospital System

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