



Harris County Hospital District

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MEDIA RELEASE

Back to School Brings Outdoor Practice and Heat-Related Illnesses

HOUSTON (August 4, 2006) – Going back to school means new clothes and homework assignments, but it can also mean outdoor sports practice and the possibility of heat-related illnesses and dehydration among school-aged kids.

“Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable,” said Dr. Julie Jones, medical director of school-based clinics at the Harris County Hospital District. “Learning the warning signs of dehydration and heat-related illnesses is important, because high body temperatures can damage the brain or other vital organs.”

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, there were 59 heat-related deaths in Texas throughout 2005, up from the 44 heat-related deaths in both 2004 and 2003.

HCHD experts remind parents and coaches that, before sending kids out for practice or play, there are ways to protect them from heat illnesses and dehydration.

- Make sure kids are well-hydrated before starting outdoor physical activities; they should drink plenty of water, even if they are not thirsty
- Wear loose fitting, lightweight clothing
- If possible, plan outdoor activities for the evenings, when the temperature is lower
- Take frequent breaks during outdoor activities

“If kids must practice during the hottest part of the day, precautions need to be taken,” Jones said. “If they start to feel lightheaded, weak or have a headache, they should find shade and drink water slowly.”

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation’s third most populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured, underinsured and medically needy residents of Harris County. The Hospital District operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, eight school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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