



Guidelines For Training and Competition for Athletes with Fever

Fever is part of the body's defense system, and can arise from infectious diseases, dehydration, or various non-infectious conditions. Athletes training or competing with fever are at risk of developing severe health conditions. Fever increases fluid loss, dehydration risk, metabolic demands, and dysregulation of body temperature. Fever can have detrimental effects on the muscles, including decreased strength and endurance, and increased generalized muscle breakdown as well as fatigue. Participating in strenuous exercise during febrile illness can worsen the illness and has demonstrated increased death in animal models. No scientific evidence supports return to activity before resolution of fever, and training should be resumed gradually once fever and dehydration have resolved.

To ensure the health and safety of our athletes, Special Olympics International (SOI) asks athletes and coaches to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Athletes should never train or compete while having fever over 38°C (100°F) or while taking of fever reducing medications (e.g. acetaminophen, paracetamol, ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.).
- Generally, athletes can return to training or competition if they are symptom and fever free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications.
- If infectious disease is suspected to be the cause of the fever, the athlete should be isolated to limit contact with other athletes and coaches.
- If symptoms persist for more than 3 days, or athlete is unwell in any way, athletes should seek advice from a health care professional.

If an athlete has systemic symptoms, however, such as fever, pain in muscles and joints, diarrhea or an elevated resting heart rate, they should refrain from exercising until symptoms have resolved for a period of 7 to 14 days, because of the risk of dehydration, prolonged illness or more serious complications. Once recovered, athletes should ease back into sports gradually, taking one to two days for every training day missed to build back up to pre-illness levels.

The best way to avoid missing training or competition is to prevent illness. Athletes can reduce their risk of infection by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and by ensuring the following:

- Eat a well-balanced diet, including vegetables, fruits and drink plenty of water;
- Get adequate sleep;
- Avoid overtraining and fatigue;
- Allow adequate recovery time following intense exercise;
- Avoid contact with people who are ill;
- Wash hands frequently with correct technique;
- Do not share uncleaned clothing (e.g., socks, shirts), water bottles or towels;
- Reduce life stressors; and
- Get recommended immunizations (e.g., measles, mumps and rubella, hepatitis A and B, influenza and tetanus).
- Do not smoke / vape, and drink alcohol moderately.

Literature:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4000470/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2532567/>

All Special Olympics programs are required to adhere to local laws and regulations to ensure the safety, well-being, and optimal performance of our athletes. In cases where specific standards do not exist, programs should refer to established global based agencies for guidance.