

Tips for prevention of common injuries and issues

Marching band is a great musical, social, and athletic activity. While our physical demands are not at the level of some drum corps and highly-competitive high school marching bands, there are risks involved. The following suggestions will help you stay healthy and uninjured from band camp through the end of the season. This article addresses heat and sun protection, repetitive-use injuries, and nutrition.

Heat and Sun Protection

During band camp and football games, you will be out in the sun for several hours at a time. Hydration and sun protection are VERY important during these times.

Hydration tips

- Even if the forecast differs, prepare for each day as though it's going to be 95 degrees out.
- Make sure you prepare by getting fluids in BEFORE heading outside. Have a glass of water or two at each meal.
- Bring a large water bottle with you during band camp. Drink every time you're given a break, even if you don't think you need it.
- On game days, we will have a wagon to transport water bottles to the game, as well as water jugs to refill them. Bring your own water bottle and use it.
- Don't wait for your body to tell you you're thirsty. If you're thirsty, it means you're already dehydrated.
- Make sure your urine stays a light yellow color. If it gets darker, you're not getting enough fluids.
- Water is the best thing to drink. Consider sports drinks to replace minerals lost from sweating, but drink water most of the time.
- The dining halls have water and Powerade available in the drink dispensers. Avoid high-sugar and carbonated drinks, especially during band camp.
- Eating right is just as important as getting enough fluids. Protein and carbohydrates are your friends on rehearsal and performance days! Don't forget your veggies, either.
- EAT BREAKFAST. See "[Nutrition](#)" below.

Sun protection

- Wear sunscreen. Wear sunscreen. Wear sunscreen.
- Sunscreen should protect from both UVA and UVB rays. Check the label!
- Reapply multiple times throughout the day.
- During band camp, wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Make sure your sunglasses also provide UV protection.
- Wear sunglasses in the stands at football games, too. The sun can be damaging to your eyes.
- Wear light-colored clothing, but put sunscreen on underneath your clothes as well.
- Don't forget the backs of your hands, your ears, or your lips when applying sunblock (many lip protectants also contain sunscreen).

Nutrition

Marching band is a physical activity, and there are some long days during band camp and on game days. Eating well is just as important as all of the above considerations, and that starts with a good breakfast. While you may not be running a marathon, you should still eat like an athlete! Keep the following in mind when you make your breakfast plans. If you're eating in your room, keep some of the good items on hand and avoid the bad ones. If you're eating at the dining hall or a restaurant, make choices based on the following recommendations:

Good options for breakfast:

Carbohydrates: Oatmeal, waffles, pancakes, bagels, low-sugar cereal, whole grain bread, fruits

Protein: Eggs, peanut butter, yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, lean meat (such as Canadian bacon or turkey bacon)

BAD options for breakfast:

Carbohydrates: Pop Tarts, doughnuts, sugary cereal, candy bars

Protein: Fast food breakfast sandwiches, high fat meat (such as real bacon or sausage), gravy

DO NOT SKIP BREAKFAST! Without breakfast, your blood glucose levels will drop, causing fatigue, lack of focus, and a general "blah" feeling. Combined with the increased activity level and time in the sun, this can even lead to fainting or worse problems. Have some protein bars and fruit on hand as a backup in case you miss breakfast for some reason.

These same tips can go throughout the day. Avoid high-fat and high-sugar items, and make sure you get a good mix of carbohydrates and protein. Don't avoid fat altogether, though, as your body does use it for fuel.

Beverages

Water is the best thing to drink at every meal. Avoid caffeine and soft drinks, especially during band camp and on game days. Sports drinks contain artificial colors and sweeteners. Use these in moderation if you sweat a lot (it will replace some salts). Juices (free of artificial sweeteners) and skim milk are other options as well, but water is really the best option for every meal (and in between...).