

RUNNING IN THE HEAT

Summer is upon us and with it comes the challenge of running in the heat. The key is to keep your core temperature down which means managing hydration and electrolyte levels. You also need to get clothing just right and find ways to keep cool. Here are some simple tips to help you cope with a (hopefully) long hot summer...

1 HYDRATE BEFORE YOUR RUN

Being dehydrated before you even start running is a sure way to end up even more dehydrated by the end of your run. Even a three percent loss of fluid levels can cause a drop in performance. Make sure you drink plenty of water (1.5-2litres) in the 24 hours before a training run. And, if you've had a few too many the night before it's best to leave your run until later in the day to give your body a chance to rehydrate itself before you start running!

2 HYDRATE WHILST YOU RUN

It might seem obvious but drinking between 0.4 to 0.8 litres of fluid every hour is essential to running well in the heat. There is no way around this as your body cannot learn to run without water. Start drinking before you feel thirsty because if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated. It takes time for your stomach to learn to cope with the increase in fluid consumption so practice drinking water during all runs not just on hot days. And keep a water bottle with you all day long taking little sips as you work.

3 CARRY A WATER BOTTLE

Unless you plan to run laps around a water fountain you'll need to carry a water bottle or wear a hydration system on your back when you run. Try before you buy. Fill the container with water whilst in the shop and make sure it's comfortable to carry as you're moving.

4 DRESS FOR THE HEAT

DITCH THE COTTON T-SHIRT IN FAVOUR OF A SHIRT MADE FROM COOL-MAX OR DRI-FIT MATERIALS. THE KEY TO YOUR BODY'S COOLING SYSTEM IS THE EVAPORATION OF SWEAT; COTTON T-SHIRTS PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING WHEREAS COOL-MAX AND DRI-FIT ENCOURAGE IT. CHOOSE LIGHT COLOURED CLOTHING AS LIGHT COLOURS REFLECT THE SUN WHEREAS DARK COLOURS ABSORB HEAT.

5 POUR WATER OVER YOURSELF

Dousing yourself with cold water particularly over your head, neck, wrists, armpits and groin will help reduce your core temperature. These areas are where the blood vessels are larger and nearer the surface of the skin so water will have a greater cooling affect.

6 STAY OUT OF THE SUN

Where possible avoid running in the middle of the day. Plan your runs for early mornings or evenings. If you can't, then pick a shady, cool route (for example in the woods).

7 SLAP ON SUNSCREEN AND A HAT

MAKE SURE YOU APPLY SUNSCREEN BEFORE YOUR RUN AND ALWAYS WEAR A LIGHT COLOURED HAT TO REFLECT THE HEAT OFF YOUR HEAD. WHEN IT'S REALLY HOT, HATS ARE ALSO USEFUL TO FILL WITH WATER AND POUR OVER YOURSELF TO KEEP REALLY COOL.

8 STICK TO THE TRAILS

Bitumen and concrete hold and reflect a lot of heat, so where possible try to run on grass or dirt trails, your feet particularly will thank you for it.

9 WATER OR HYDRATING SPORTS DRINK?

We know that sports drinks provide easily digestible carbohydrates to give us energy whilst we run. What many people don't realise is they also provide the essential electrolytes sodium and potassium which are lost via sweat and need to be replaced to maintain optimum electrolyte levels. Sodium also stimulates thirst and increases the uptake of water from the stomach to where it's needed. Drinking too much water alone can dilute electrolyte concentrations to dangerous levels. So, if your run is more than an hour long, ensure you consume sodium and potassium either in the form of a sports drink or electrolyte tablets.

10 REHYDRATE AFTER YOUR RUN

Once you've finished your run continue drinking water to replenish any fluids lost. When your urine is clear you know you are back to a good hydration level. Try and stay away from alcohol until this happens. **RF**

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