

Steps for Smart Summer Running

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You may have thought it would never happen, but the warm weather has finally arrived. Running in summer heat poses a few new physical challenges to athletes. As the thermometer rises, our bodies have to work harder to moderate our internal body temperature and supply our muscles with oxygen. All the energy spent on keeping cool forces our heart rates to elevate.

Here are five steps to ensure smart summer running.

1. Increase Fluid Intake

Our body's first line of defense to battle the heat is to sweat. Sweating is a natural cooling process that allows the body to internally regulate its temperature. When sweat evaporates on the skin, it effectively removes body heat. It's vital to replace the fluids lost through sweat. Don't wait until after you've completed your first mile to start drinking water. Try to adhere to these three guidelines.

- Drink 16 oz. of water in the two hours prior to your workout
- Drink 3 to 6 oz. of water every 15 minutes during your workout
- Follow-up with 8 oz. of water 30 minutes post-workout

If you find that much water hard to swallow, mix in some flavored sports drinks.

2. Plan Wisely

Working out in the coolest times of the day will help prevent heat related injuries. Now that the sun rises early, it's easier to coax yourself out of bed for a pre-work jog. Try to avoid running during peak sun (between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.). Evening runs are another option, but make sure to keep safety paramount by wearing reflective clothing and heeding other basic nighttime precautions.

Try to map out your running routes for optimum warm weather enjoyment. Choose routes with plenty of shade. If you won't be near a public water fountain, plan to bring <your own> to maintain your fluid intake.

3. Lighten up the wardrobe

A little bit of planning will keep you comfortable from head to toe. The first step towards beating the heat is to cover your head. Invest in a lightweight cap with air vents and bring along a pair of

sunglasses to protect your eyes from harmful UV exposure.

When dressing for a run, choose lightweight clothing with a loose fit. Opt for light colors and leave the cotton tees at home (cotton tends to absorb moisture and becomes heavy as it soaks up your perspiration). Try the new breathable technical fabrics available on the marketplace.

Finally, don't forget your feet--be sure to wear running socks with wicking properties to keep your toes dry and blister-free.

4. Sun Protection

Before you head out on your run, make sure to properly apply sunscreen to protect your skin from harmful UVB and UVA rays. Select a water resistant lotion with a high SPF (30 or more). The water resistant formulas will keep protecting your skin even while you sweat.

Melody Appleton, the founder of ProTech skin care for outdoor enthusiasts, recommends runners let sunscreen absorb for 30 minutes prior to going out into the sun and then reapply more lotion every few hours.

Appleton's research proves that a quality sunscreen (one that contains one of these three key ingredients: Avobenzone, Titanium Dioxide or Zinc Oxide) can help prevent premature aging and protect skin against cancer causing sun exposure.

5. Acclimation

If you are accustomed to running indoors on a treadmill, give yourself some time to adjust to the warm temperatures outdoors. Slowly increase the intensity and duration of your runs over a two-week period.

When planning your workouts, monitor not just the temperature, but also the humidity. High humidity can be especially stressful for athletes because sweat can't evaporate when the air is laden with moisture, and this interferes with the body's natural cooling process.

Finally, use your commonsense when working out in the heat. When temperatures are soaring near record levels, don't try to push yourself. Either relocate your workout to a treadmill or indoor track, or give yourself a day off. With some careful planning, it's possible to enjoy your outdoor training without sacrificing health and safety.

HYPERTHERMIA WARNINGS:

Hyperthermia, the effect of being overexposed to extreme heat, can manifest itself in three ways:

Heat Cramps: Cramps are most often felt in runner's calves and abdominal muscles. According to Elizabeth Quinn, an exercise physiologist and health information researcher, heat cramps usually arise after several hours of exertion and when sodium (and/or other electrolyte) levels are depleted. Quinn recommends replacing lost electrolytes and fluids as the best **treatment** for heat cramps.

Heat Exhaustion: Signaled by profuse sweating accompanied by cool and clammy skin. Victims of heat exhaustion will have body temperatures still hovering in the normal range. Athletes should find a shaded spot and start replacing fluids. Try to begin cooling your body temperature with a cool bath or shower as soon as possible.

Heat Stroke: According to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), heat stroke is considered a medical emergency. At this point, the body has stopped producing sweat and skin appears dry and red. Core body temperatures can spike to 105 degrees and victims may lose consciousness. The ACSM asserts that those suffering from heat stroke should seek medical attention immediately as this condition can be life threatening.

Be alert for other **symptoms** of heat illness including: dark yellow urine, loss of energy, dizziness, loss of coordination, headaches, or unusual fatigue. Stop your **workout** and assess your health if you are experiencing any signs of hyperthermia.