



Heat-Related Illness Tips for athletes to prevent heat-related illness

Heat-related illness is preventable, and can occur even in cool weather.

What Contributes to Heat Illness?

- Weather: temperature and humidity
- Running speed
- Fitness level and level of conditioning to the heat
- Underlying medical problems
- Overdressing during activity

Types of Heat Illnesses

HEAT CRAMPS

Symptoms: Muscle cramping probably caused by loss of electrolytes, lactic acid accumulation in muscles.

What to do: Slow down, drink sports drinks, massage affected muscles, stop and rest, seek help at medical tent along the race course.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Symptoms: Normal or slightly elevated body temperature, lightheadedness, nausea, vomiting, decreased coordination, muscle cramps, fainting.

What to do: Stop running, rest, cool with ice packs, drink sports drinks, get medical help and IV fluids.

HEAT STROKE: MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, fast heart rate, headache, fast breathing, muscle

cramps, lack of coordination, inability to walk, dizziness, confusion, disorientation, staggering or collapse. Medical staff identifies core body temperature over 104°F and low blood pressure.

What to do: Seek medical help immediately for cold water immersion and IV fluids under medical supervision; possible hospital transport.

Tips to Prevent Heat Illness

PROPER HYDRATION IS IMPORTANT. Thirst is a late sign of dehydration, but taking too much water can cause hyponatremia, or low sodium levels, which can be dangerous.

- To estimate your fluid status: look at the color of your urine — pale yellow or clear urine reflects hydration; darker yellow means you are likely dehydrated.

AVOID ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION the night before the race.

WEAR WEATHER-APPROPRIATE CLOTHING.

It might be cool in the morning, but your body temperature will increase as you start exercising, and the outside weather temperature will rise during the race.

- Wear a visor or hat with mesh that will shade your eyes and skin but will allow heat to transfer off the top of your head
- Microfiber shorts and short-sleeved or tank tops keep your body cool

- Run in the shade when possible and avoid direct sunlight
- Use sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Wear protective eyewear that filters out UVA and UVB rays

Simply slowing down can prevent many forms of heat illness. It is better to run a “slow” race and finish healthy, than to push yourself to accomplish a time goal and end up in the hospital. Even fast, well-conditioned runners have been overcome by heat illness.

DO NOT RUN ON RACE DAY if you have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or otherwise feel sick in the morning of the race.

CHANGE YOUR RACE DISTANCE OR DEFER until next year if you feel unprepared.

CONSULT WITH YOUR DOCTOR before running a race if you have ever experienced heat stroke or heat illness, you are at-risk to develop this condition again.

STOP RUNNING if you become dizzy, nauseated, or develop chills while running. Find shade, drink water or sports drink and seek medical help.