

Hot Weather Walking or Running Tips

Adapted from the Road Runners Club of America

Walking and running in the heat of summer can be dangerous (especially in the south!) if proper precautions and preparations are not followed.

Avoid dehydration! You can lose between 6 and 12 oz. of fluid for every 20 minutes of running or walking. Therefore it is important to pre-hydrate (10–15 oz. of fluid 10 to 15 minutes prior to exercising) and drink fluids every 20–30 minutes along your workout route. To determine if you are hydrating properly, weigh yourself before and after walking/running. You should have drunk one pint of fluid for every pound you're missing. Indications that you are walking or running while dehydrated are a persistent elevated pulse after finishing your walk/run and dark yellow urine. Keep in mind that thirst is not an adequate indicator of dehydration.

Avoid walking or running outside if ... the heat is above 98.6 degrees and the humidity is above 70-80%. While exercising, the body temperature is regulated by the process of sweat evaporating off of the skin. If the humidity in the air is so high that it prevents the process of evaporation of sweat from the skin, you can quickly overheat. Check your local weather and humidity level. Think about exercising at an indoor mall or on a treadmill.

Stop walking or running if ... you become dizzy, nauseated, have the chills, or cease to sweat.... STOP WALKING or RUNNING, find shade, and drink water or a fluid replacement drink, such as Gatorade. If you do not feel better, get help. Heatstroke occurs when the body fails to regulate its own temperature, and the body temperature continues to rise. Symptoms of heatstroke include mental changes (such as confusion, delirium, or unconsciousness) and skin that is red, hot, and dry, even under the armpits. Heatstroke is a life-threatening medical emergency, requiring emergency medical treatment.

Walk and Run in the shade whenever possible and avoid direct sunlight and blacktop. When you are going to be exposed to the intense summer rays of the sun, apply at least 15 SFP sunscreen and wear protective eyewear that filters out UVA and UVB rays. Consider wearing a visor that will shade your eyes and skin but will allow heat to transfer off the top of your head.

Consult your doctor - If you have heart or respiratory problems or you are on any medications, consult your doctor about walking or running in the heat. In some cases it may be in your best interests to walk/run indoors. If you have a history of heatstroke/illness, walk or run with extreme caution.

Walk or run in the morning or late afternoon/evening hours. Avoid the peak heat of the day to prevent heat related illnesses. It is especially important to keep children hydrated while walking, running and playing outdoors in the heat.

Do wear light colored breathable clothing. Do not wear long sleeves or long pants or sweat suits. Purposefully walking or running in sweat suits hot days to lose water weight is dangerous!

Plan your route so you can refill water bottles or find drinking fountains. City parks, local merchants, and restaurants are all good points to incorporate on your route during exercising. Be sure to tell someone where you are walking or running, how long you think you will gone, and carry identification.

Stay hydrated, cool, and safe this summer!