



Beating the Heat: A Physician's Advice for Marathon Runners

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Summer brings longer days and plenty of opportunity to build mileage—but rising temperatures demand extra vigilance from marathon runners. Training smart in the heat can make the difference between peak performance and serious setbacks.

High temperatures add stress to the cardiovascular system, accelerate fluid loss, and increase the risk of heat-related illness. With strategic planning, runners can stay safe while continuing to train effectively.



Timing Matters

Midday heat can be brutal. Aim to run in the early morning or evening when the sun is low and ambient temperatures are cooler. Scheduling long runs outside peak heat hours helps preserve hydration and minimizes the risk of overheating.



Plan Routes with Hydration in Mind

Strategic route planning can make a significant difference during summer runs. Choose paths that pass public drinking fountains, parks, or convenience stores where you can stop to refill water or purchase electrolyte drinks. Mapping your route ahead of time also allows you to identify shaded segments, rest areas, and places to cool down if needed. For long runs, consider looping back to your starting point or a hydration station at regular intervals to avoid running low on fluids.



Hydration Starts Early

Hydration isn't just about the run itself—it's about maintaining fluid balance throughout the day. Drink water consistently, and supplement with electrolytes before and during longer training sessions. Consider a hydration vest or handheld bottle for runs exceeding 60 minutes, especially in high heat.



Dress for Success

Wearing lightweight, moisture-wicking clothing in light colors helps regulate core temperature. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), and gear up with a ventilated hat and UV-protective sunglasses to keep skin and eyes safe from the sun.



Monitor Your Body's Signals

Even seasoned runners must be alert to warning signs. Symptoms like dizziness, nausea, or fatigue may signal heat exhaustion. Stop immediately, seek shade, and hydrate. Ignoring these signs can escalate into heat stroke—a medical emergency.



Eat to Compensate

Hot weather can impair digestion and hasten nutrient depletion, making proper fueling essential. Incorporate water-rich foods like watermelon, pineapple, cucumbers, and leafy greens into your daily intake to support hydration. After long runs, aim to eat within 30 minutes—this window is critical for replenishing glycogen stores and kickstarting muscle recovery. Include a mix of complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, and protein, along with electrolyte-rich snacks or beverages to optimize refueling and minimize fatigue.

Final Takeaway: Training for a marathon in the summer isn't about pushing harder—it's about adapting smarter. Respect the conditions, prioritize hydration, plan your route thoughtfully, and listen to your body. The goal is not just finishing the race, but finishing strong, healthy, and ready for what's next.

Stay cool, stay safe—and enjoy the miles ahead.

