

Summer Training

Don't let the summer heat slow your training. Follow these tips to help keep your exercise intensity above base line while the heat is on.

As summer rolls in, the attraction of training outdoors is too hard to resist. But hot, humid conditions not only increase core temperature but also divert the blood from the muscles and vital organs, such as the heart, to the skin. While you're trying to exercise, the body is also trying to cool itself and your muscles and heart work harder to get the blood supply they need to perform well.

So how do you deal with the extra heat and discomfort, and maintain your workload through the worst of the summer months?

1 HYDRATE PROPERLY

Drink water during exercise, aiming for 250ml every 20 to 30 minutes. Studies show that a loss of fluid equal to two per cent of body mass can alter the body's ability to function well and affect performance, with the first signs of dehydration, dizziness or light-headedness also becoming noticeable. Sports nutritionist Dr Rebecca C. Reynolds says it's important to begin your workout hydrated. "Most people don't actually drink enough water in their day-to-day lives, so they start off exercising dehydrated to begin with!"

2 WEAR THE RIGHT CLOTHES

Wear loose light coloured cotton or moisture wicking clothing, including a hat and sunscreen. Sportswear makers now sell everything from Dri Fit to Climacool high performance moisture wicking fabrics, but simple cotton is just as good. German researchers tested a group of fit runners in shirts made of varying grades of polyester (moisture wicking fabrics) and one in cotton, in a 31.7 degree room. They found that high performance moisture wicking clothing made no difference to body temperature or performance, although during recovery it did promote lower body temperature as it absorbed less sweat.

3 CHOOSE YOUR TIMES

Move workouts to earlier in the morning or the evening and exercise in shady areas, or with the benefit of a cooling sea breeze. Sydney exercise physiologist Allan Bolton suggests that if you want to do a hard session outside, you should be out in the early morning or in the evening, to avoid the heat.

4 STICK WITH AIR CONDITIONING

On super hot days, stick to indoor training sessions in the air-conditioned comfort of the gym. In exceptionally hot or humid weather, working out in the open, no matter how early or late, will just be too uncomfortable. Alternatively, hit the pool or ocean.

5 TRY "PALMAR COOLING"

Hold a frozen bottle of water when you exercise or run. A study by Stanford University School of Medicine showed that carrying a "palmar cooling" device in your hands creates a heat sink that cools the venous (deoxygenated) blood moving through the palms back to the lungs, lowering the rate of body temperature rise when training. The research was done on obese women aged 30 to 45 but the results are indisputable, showing greater improvements in aerobic activity as well as blood pressure and heart rate. ◻

HOT WORKOUTS

While most of us are trying to get out of the heat, some want to train in it. The latest fad in the US is gyms offering heated sessions in temperatures up to 37C. We're not talking Hot Yoga, which is popular in Australia, but heated gyms offering everything from pilates to indoor cycling. Proponents say that working out in the heat is the equivalent of working harder, since the heart has to pump harder and the greater sweating is like a detox. The detractors call hot workouts another crazy and even dangerous fad that puts more strain on the heart and raises the possibility of heat stress and even strokes.

