

Newsletter

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Tips on marathon safety

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Are you over-hydrating By: Carol Potera

It may seem like dehydration would be one of marathoners' worse foes, yet recreational long-distance runners often miscalculate their water needs and drink too much. **Overconsumption of H₂O sometimes leads to hyponatremia, a condition that develops when you take in so much water that you disrupt your blood's critical sodium balance.** Symptoms include lethargy and disorientation, as well as life-threatening seizures and respiratory distress.

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found that 13 percent of Boston Marathon finishers in 2002 were hyponatremic. The most likely sufferers? Slow runners, who stop at every water station and women, since they usually have less body mass to absorb water than men. "To become hyponatremic, you need to drink a lot of water over a long time," says Benjamin D. Levine, M.D., director of the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine at Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas and a professor of cardiology at the University of Texas Southwestern in Dallas.

To calculate your hourly water needs, weigh yourself before a one-hour practice run and keep track of how much water you drink during your run. Weigh yourself when you finish and find the difference in pounds from your starting weight (e.g., 0.5 pound). Then multiply that by 15.3 and add that number to the ounces you actually gulped while running. That's how much water you should drink each hour. **If you weigh more after a training run, you are drinking too much water and should cut back.** For more details, visit usatf.org and click on "hydration guidelines."

Speedy post-marathon recovery By: Zibby Right

You survived 26.2 tough miles. Now what should you do?

Immediately after the marathon: *Refuel.* Get a mixture of fluids, carbohydrates and protein into your system as soon as possible, advises Greg Wenneborg, program director and head coach of Craftsbury Running Camp in Craftsbury Common, VT. Since starved muscles absorb nutrients most efficiently in the first 30-60 minutes after intense exercise, Wenneborg suggests drinking at least 8 ounces of water or a sports drink immediately after the race, paired with a piece of fruit like a potassium-rich banana. Trail mix, smoothies and bagels with peanut butter are also good options. Forgo alcohol and caffeine for 24 hours; alcohol can weaken your already vulnerable immune system and caffeine inhibits the absorption of minerals that your body needs to recover.

Keep moving. Get up and walk around every 15-20 minutes for the first 24-36 waking hours after the race to prevent excessive soreness. Avoid hot tubs; the heat impedes recovery of microtears in muscle fibers.

In the first week after the marathon: *Lighten your workload.* Matt Ebersole, founder of Personal Best Training, based in Indianapolis, encourages "active rest." Swim, walk, hike or cycle. Exercising lightly for

at least 15-20 minutes twice a week will help speed recovery by increasing blood flow, clearing byproducts of intense or sustained exercise in the muscles and helping restore flexibility.

In the first month after the marathon: *Start slowly.* Begin running again at a comfortable pace and slowly add distance. The American Council on Exercise suggests starting week two at 25 percent or less of your normal average training quantity at an easy intensity, then increasing to 25-40 percent in week three and no more than 50 percent in week four, gradually adding 10 percent per week until you get back to your pre-marathon mileage level, if that is desired. Monitor food intake, if post-marathon weight gain is a concern, watch your calorie consumption after week one. If you continue to eat as much as you did when you were training and are burning fewer calories through exercise post-marathon, that will lead to a weight gain.