



Fun and Fitness in the Summer Sun

By Joe Stein, President



Just a few weeks ago, we were wearing sweaters and sitting in front of fireplaces. Now perspiration mixes with SPF 30 as it drips off our faces onto our summer reads. Although many people complained about the weather earlier this spring, we were able to exercise comfortably in its damp coolness. Now that the hazy, hot and humid dog days are approaching, extra precautions must be taken when we exercise outdoors, especially by those with allergies, asthma, diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure. If you are pregnant, elderly, recovering from an illness or on medication, you can still exercise, but you must get advice and guidelines from your doctor.

A Time for Caution

If you plan to exercise outdoors, and the temperature is above 90 degrees or the humidity is over 75%, reduce your level of exertion and the duration of your routine. Take things down a notch: walk instead of run, play one set of tennis rather than three, shoot nine holes, not eighteen. If you have a heart or respiratory ailment, and the local authority issues a health advisory or ozone alert, do not exercise outdoors at all. Sometimes the better part of valor involves doing your workout in air conditioning.

Protection Checklist

Water: Proper hydration is important in achieving maximum athletic performance. More importantly, it is critical for preventing heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. How much to drink? To be on the safe side, follow the “eight by eight” rule...eight eight-ounce glasses of water. When exercising, do not wait until you feel thirsty to drink, as thirst is not a reliable indicator of when your body is in need of water. Thirty minutes before exercising, drink an eight ounce glass of water. Rehydrate every twenty minutes or so with cool water or sports drinks cut with 50% water. Drink on a schedule, consuming an additional eight ounces thirty minutes after you’ve completed your routine.

Sunscreen: Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. Apply generously on all exposed skin. To have maximum protection, apply at least thirty minutes prior to going outside, as sunscreens need time to be absorbed. Don’t forget your lips. Many lip balms now provide SPF 15 protection.

Clothing: Wear light-colored, loose fitting clothing that has a tight weave. New high-tech clothing has special fabric that blocks the harmful rays of the sun. It works well but may be expensive. Do not wear anything that exposes too much skin, such as tank tops

or mesh fabrics. Large brimmed hats or baseball caps will protect your scalp, face and eyes.

Sunglasses: Sunglasses: Movie stars wear them. Rock stars wear them. Even robots like “The Terminator” wear them. Do you have yours? Protection from UV radiation is important for eye safety. Polarized lenses are especially good if you are on the water. To be effective, sunglasses need not be expensive, but they must block 100% of UV rays.

Common Sense: If you exercise outdoors, exercise common sense. If you feel faint, weak, nauseous or dizzy, immediately stop exercising and seek help if these sensations do not pass in a few minutes. Take heart--even a person who has been exercising indoors on a regular basis may have difficulty when exercising outdoors on a steamy day. It takes time to become acclimated to the heat and humidity. Gradual, progressive exposure to the special challenges of heat and humidity is a good strategy for staying out of the doghouse during the upcoming dog days of summer.

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