

Keeping up pace without burning up

Such heat! How can anyone stay motivated and hydrated enough to jog or walk at the end of a workday when the temperature is still above ninety degrees Fahrenheit?

It takes planning, especially to maintain the fluid content of the human body under exertion in this heat. Without proper hydration, not only does mental motivation start to falter, but very real risks begin to develop in the circulatory and nervous systems of even an already fit athlete.

After one's health care professional has cleared a person for vigorous exercise, there still remains a need to understand how the body manages the heat that it generates during exercise, in addition to the heat it absorbs from the surrounding hot air and pavement.

Whether it is the heat generated from muscle activity or externally absorbed heat, our muscles and our nerves do their best work when the body's internal temperature is kept steady. Mild dehydration occurs when we lose up to 2% of our pre-exercise body weight. For a person who weighs one hundred and fifty pounds, this translates to a three pound loss. This commonly occurs during a one hour jog of six miles on a hot day.

Even with just half that much dehydration, studies show that there is measurable worsening of muscular contractions, of balance and coordination, and of stamina. In a friendly competition with a training buddy, this means that a well hydrated cyclist or runner would finish a hundred yards ahead of the buddy who is just 1 percent dehydrated.

the week can allow a person to sense and recognize their proper hydration level. In addition, by becoming a better trained athlete, one becomes less susceptible to heat injury.

Other than the obvious and very effective step of electing to use only mornings to exercise outdoors, there are other useful ways to work out in and adapt somewhat to our summer heat. With our part of the Uncompahgre Valley being at an elevation of almost 6,000 feet above sea level, the intensity of solar radiation here is significant. The simple step of choosing light colored clothing for outdoor workouts can reduce the heat that we absorb from the sun.

Starting off with a water-soaked shirt can increase the rate that heat leaves our body through evaporation, even before we start to sweat. Instead of going hatless or just wearing a visor, less heat is soaked up by a person who wears a hat that is designed to reflect the sun's heat while simultaneously wicking sweat away and also ventilating the top of the head.

Selecting a runner's singlet (similar to a tank top or an undershirt) which is made of fabric that wicks away sweat can get rid of more internal heat than can a t-shirt made of the same fabric. However, the solar gain due to the increased surface area of skin exposed to the sun may counteract the benefit of the singlet, depending on the individual's body build.

Humpty Dumpty vs. Jack Sprat

Some of us have bodies that naturally insulate us significantly, whether we like it or not. A Humpty may actually have lots of muscle mass and very little fat, but even so there will be metabolic heat generated within his or her core, and this heat will then be slowed in its process of reaching the exterior surface of the skin and escaping.

A Jack Sprat, being without much



On the first Tuesday of summer, more than a dozen runners burst from the starting line at 2 Rascals Brewery despite the 90-degree heat. (Courtesy photo)



Outdoors

By John T. Unger

Top off the tank

If each muscle cell can be thought of as a tank of fluid, we should begin an event with a full tank, by hydrating well and purposefully at least by the day before the event. Of course, timing the fluid intake takes practice so as not to begin with a full bladder. Here is where regular exercise habits through

thick muscle or much fat, can more easily deliver his muscle-generated heat to the exterior skin surface and quickly let it escape, even into a hot environment.

Whichever build each of us is blessed with, we need not feel alone if we hike, jog, or run even on these hot days, while we look forward to our chance of the

next rainstorm.

John T. Unger is a Diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, with over twenty-five years of practice in Montrose. He appreciates the chance to keep putting one foot in front of the other each day. Ideas for future columns are welcomed at sportsdocunger.com.

Campfires and the dry season: Use common sense



The area around your fire should be free of dry grasses and brush. (Courtesy photo)

There is an old saying for us Coloradans that is, "Never complain about precipitation of any kind." When we have dry and mild winters, it may seem nice, but the consequences are present during the summer. The rivers run clear and low. The greens begin to turn brown, and the fire danger rises.

We all love to go camping, hiking and generally enjoying the outdoors in the summer months. Having a campfire, either for a midday break, or as part of an overnight campsite, goes along with it. This may require some special considerations while we are in a dry time. The last thing any of want to be is on the bad side of Smokey The Bear because we started a wildfire.

First is the possibility that there is a total ban on open fires. Some years the dry conditions have been bad enough to warrant this. If this is the case you should adhere to the rules and use alternate means of cooking food outdoors that does not involve open flames. If such a ban is not in place then let's discuss an appropriate fire set up.

Many campsites have fire rings or fire grates already there. If this is the case, you should use these for your campfire. If one is not present, or if you are not camping in a designated campground, be certain that the regulations allow an open

fire. If so, begin the construction of your fire pit.

Usually the fire size should not exceed two feet by two feet. This is more than enough for warmth and cooking. Anything larger can be difficult to manage. The area should be away from any standing trees and shrubs. The area you select should be 20 to 30 feet away from them for safety reasons. Be certain that any flammables such as gas, propane or fuel for stoves is far away from the pit. Scrape down to the bare ground in the area you have chosen and encircle it in a ring of rocks. Some folks like to dig the pit out some but try not to harm the landscape if you do.

The area around your fire should be free of dry grasses and brush. The embers from your fire could light in some dry grass and cause a problem so be certain that you have established a safety zone. Your firewood should be kept away from the open fire and having a bucket of water and shovel close by is a good idea. Things like aluminum cans should never be discarded in the fire. They do not burn. Pack your trash out with you.

Keep children away from the open fire for obvious reasons. An open fire should never be left unattended. Let the fire die down to coals before retiring for the evening. If winds pick up during the night it could

cause the hot embers to blow out of the pit and ignite elsewhere so if possible, it is a good idea to extinguish the fire at bedtime.

You will probably find that it is much easier to cook on a camp stove than on a campfire. Not only easier, but it is safer to cook on the stove as well. Use a lantern for light in the evening rather than building the fire up too high. The Indians used to say that a fire should be small so you can sit close and stay warm. I personally have burned up more than one pair of boots by a big fire, trying to keep my feet warm.

Before you abandon your campsite, make sure that the fire is dead out. Pouring water on it is the surest way but sometimes that is not practical. Covering the fire with dirt to smother the coals works. Be certain to turn the dirt over and over until the area is cold to the touch. Police the area to return it to the natural state you found it in. When outdoors, try not to leave anything behind but your footprints.

A warm campfire is one of the most enjoyable things about being in the woods. The hypnotizing effect of the bouncing flames, the warmth upon your face, as you gaze up at the twinkling stars. The thought of it makes me wish I were up there now, let's just do it safely. Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.



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By Mark Rackay



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