



Fitness Facts

Runners: Beware Of Over-Hydration

(NAPSA)—Over-hydration can be more dangerous than dehydration. Consider this: Up to 27 percent of athletes seeking medical attention during long races show warning signs of hyponatremia.

The 200,000-plus runners approaching the starting line of major marathons each year need to heed warnings about a recently identified, potentially life-threatening hazard that can result from drinking too much water: hyponatremia.

"While the dangers of not drinking enough water are common knowledge amongst people participating in endurance activities, there is something that can be much more dangerous: too much water, or over-hydration," said Dr. Arthur Siegel, a physician at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass., and leading researcher on hyponatremia who has run 20 marathons.

Exercise-related hyponatremia may occur during prolonged sports activity such as marathons, triathlons, long-distance hiking or bicycling when fluid intake, including water and sports drinks, exceeds fluid loss. When water dilutes the body's salts, the blood has too much water and too little sodium, causing brain cells to absorb too much water, swell and push against the skull. This can result in nausea, severe fatigue, disorientation, vomiting and, in the most severe cases, seizures, coma and even death.

All endurance athletes who over-drink are at risk, but those most prone to the condition include females and people with marathon finishing times over four hours who are hyper-vigilant about their water intake. Additionally, runners who take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like Advil®



It's a step in the wrong direction to drink more than 16 to 24 ounces of fluid one to two hours before running a race.

and Aleve® for pain relief in close proximity to race time may be at risk.

Despite new hydration guidelines and educational materials developed by the USA Track & Field Association, the American Medical Athletic Association and marathon race directors, many runners have not gotten the word about hyponatremia.

Runners should weigh themselves before and after their next long training run to determine if their body tends to retain fluid during endurance exercise. "If they gain weight, they are at risk for the condition and should take precautions during the marathon," said Siegel.

During a race, he said it is vital that runners avoid over-drinking. Runners who develop progressive headache, nausea or vomiting should stop all fluid intake including sports drinks and seek medical assistance immediately. If a marathoner plans to take a pain reliever, take Tylenol® 8 Hour as a safe over-the-counter choice during endurance sports activity.

For more information about hyponatremia, visit www.MarathonFirstTimers.com.