

Exercising in the Heat

We all know Australian summers can be hot, but it isn't until you get a heat wave of constant 37-39 degree days that you really feel it. It doesn't mean you have to give up your love for the great outdoors, it just means you need to be smart about what you do, when you do it and how you do it. Exercising in the heat can be very stressful on the body, but there are ways to make it work. Wearing black tights on a midday/early afternoon run on a track with no shade and without a water bottle, this is an example of a terrible idea... The key things to think about when exercising in the heat are the type of clothing you wear, the time at which you choose to exercise, the location of your exercise, and of course... your water intake. Let's go through each one.

Wear appropriate clothing.

Best clothing to wear during a hot day – light coloured, loose fitting, light weight, breathable clothing. This will help the body evaporate sweat and cool you down. Dark colours tend to absorb heat so always opt for light colours. Dress appropriately to the temperatures outside and you will find your workout much more bearable.

Timing.

Do not choose to do midday or early afternoon exercise outdoors. This is when the temperatures are at their highest. Opt for morning workouts or exercise later in the evening when the sun is not at its peak.

Location.

Seek shaded areas to do your exercise. Direct sun will heat your body temperature much quicker, especially if you are running around in it. Shade helps you stay cooler, protects you from getting sun burnt, and is just a much more pleasant exercising experience.

Fluid Intake.

Dehydration is a key factor in heat related illnesses such as heat stroke. This can be avoided if you ensure you drink plenty of water before, during and after your workouts. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink water, drink it constantly throughout the day and throughout your workout. The more you sweat, the more you will need to drink to replace the lost fluids and maintain hydration.

A few other things that you can take on board when you exercise in warmer temperatures. You do and will acclimatise. It won't happen in one workout but over time your body will get used to the heat and it will start to regulate your body temperature more efficiently. Just remember to take it easy when you first start out because it will take time to acclimatise. The other thing is to know your fitness level. If you are new to exercise, be sure to ease your way into it, especially in the heat. You may find that your body is less tolerant to the heat so reduce the exercise intensity slightly, take frequent breaks and drink lots of water.

