

Remember fate of Icarus running in heat

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Some of you might remember the legend of Icarus. His father, Daedalus, donned feathered wings glued by wax to escape Crete, where Daedalus designed the labyrinth for the cannibalistic Minotaur. Like a good father, Daedalus warned Icarus not to soar too high because the sun would melt the wax holding the wings together. Icarus disregarded his father's advice, soared too high and close to the sun and plunged into the sea.

The story of Icarus is a good analogy of running in the summer heat.

Last Sunday in the last leg of a triathlon — a 300-meter swim, a 10-mile bike and a 3-mile run — the heat hit me hard at the halfway point in the run. I slowed down. I didn't want to collapse on the concrete and not finish.

In the last mile of a 5-miler on June 29, I really dragged through the last mile and a half. Friday I slogged through a 3.5-miler in a morning soaked with 90 percent humidity. In record-breaking summer heat, runners need to remember the fate of Icarus; we should not soar too high, run too fast or push as hard as we usually do.

Some runners escape the heat by running on a treadmill inside. However, for those of us who must get outside and enjoy the world around us, we must be aware of four stages of heat-related injuries, the most serious of which can kill us.

First, heat cramps result from a loss of electrolytes and the accumulation of lactic acid in the muscles. Heat cramps are best treated by slowing down, drinking water or a sports drink with electrolytes and massaging the cramped area.

Second, heat exhaustion also results from a loss of electrolytes and includes heavy sweating, a drop in blood pressure, an elevated body temperature, and lightheadedness, nausea, vomiting, decreased coordination and maybe fainting. Stop running immediately and rest in a cool or shaded place, drink water and sports drinks. You should seek emergency medical treatment and avoid physical activity for at least 24 hours. Don't run or exercise in the heat for at least a week.

Third, heat stroke is a medical emergency and can be fatal. The body temperature soars to 106 degrees or higher, perspiration stops; victims may become delirious. Runners might not realize anything is wrong because of an altered consciousness. Emergency medical treatment is imperative; expose skin to the air and apply ice to the underarms and neck.

Outside runners who want to avoid the perils and dangers of running in the summer heat should be prudent and practical. First of all, run early in the morning or later in the evening. Second, route your runs in areas with occasional or lots of shady areas. Third, stay hydrated. Route your run so that you can drink sports drinks or water every half-mile to a mile. I carry water with me in a "handteen"; it's not difficult to carry a bottle of water or sports drink in your hand. Some runners have "camel packs" so they can sip water through longer runs. Don't run in an isolated area where you might not be found if you faint in the heat. Wear an ID tag in case you do collapse and cannot communicate.

Dress for hot running. Wear loose clothing that "wicks" the sweat. Wear a hat. You might even put a cool, soaked sponge in the hat to keep your head cool. On a hot, humid day, slow your pace by 5 to 10 percent.

Have fun frolicking in the summer heat, but take the proper precautions and be aware when you have pushed yourself too hard or "soared" too high and end up like Icarus.

Bill Shaw's running column appears every other Monday in *The Facts*.

