



Triathlon is a summer sport, so hot weather is unavoidable, especially on the Gold Coast in Australia.

There is no doubt that training and racing in the heat does make things more difficult. Heat impacts us all at a physiological level through various means, including dehydration, increased heart rate and reduced blood flow (and therefore oxygen) to the muscles used for running.

These adverse effects come in to play, due to the body's cooling system – sweat. As we sweat more in the heat – to cool ourselves – we of course experience fluid loss. This leads to dehydration – according to the amount we sweat. Dehydration has quite noticeable effects on performance through increased body temperature and heart rate.

To compound things, increased dehydration also leads to reductions in blood volumes – which leads to less blood to your heart and therefore less oxygen rich blood to your working muscles and increased tiredness.

To illustrate the effects of heat on performance, it is widely accepted that for every 10 degrees the temperature rises, you will generally slow 3-6 minutes over a Standard distance triathlon. This is a marked effect on performance.

How do you prepare for heat?

1. Improving your Fitness – Generally you will find that when you are fitter, you will handle the heat better. This is simply due to the fact, that through training you are increasing your blood plasma – which directly improves your body's ability to cool. Improving your fitness does not mean you need to train excessively in the heat, rather you should train regularly so your base fitness is improved.
2. Train in hot conditions – if you expose your body with the conditions in training which you are going to face during a race, you will prepare better. It is important to note however, that this should be a controlled exposure to heat, and your training sessions must be modified according to heat (for example you may still do your run workout, but at a lower intensity or shorter period of time).
3. Adjust your training goals for heat – It is important that you adjust your training in the heat so you are not mentally scarred by training with unrealistic expectations. For example, as mentioned above, in the heat of the day a run session will generally produce slower times. This is not due to a lack of ability to perform in the heat – rather it is a very normal outcome of training in the heat.



4. Prepare for races properly - if you know your racing will be done in hot weather there are a number of things you can do –
 - a. You can wear a hat, or more clothes in training, to get yourself used to feeling hotter than normal.
 - b. It is also a good idea to increase your intake of electrolytes in the week leading into your race, and
 - c. On race day undertake a shorter warm up to avoid wasting too much energy.

5. Keep your thoughts positive – teach yourself to remain positive and remain aware that in the heat, if you are not feeling great, it is not just you – everyone is coping with the same conditions.

In summary, I would recommend you avoid training indoors, and either train early in the morning on those days that are simply too hot to train outdoors. Most days however, I would recommend you allow your body to adapt to training in the heat, as generally your races will be.