Runners are Drinking Water Wrong - Here's The Fix

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[00:00:00] Energy gels are magical until they absolutely destroy your guts. Hydration is essential. Until it starts working against you. Today, we're untangling one of the biggest nutrition myths Runners fall for, and showing you how to fuel smarter on the run. I'll be going over so you can learn when to actually use energy gels and when you're wasting your money.

[00:00:21] The difference between hydration and just drinking more water, why electrolytes and salt is so important in your hydration strategy. It took me a horrendous Ironman experience, which I'll talk about later on, how to avoid cramping and gut issues with the right fuel time and combo, and a bunch more. Oh, and if you stick around into the middle, I have a bonus free download bundle that will help you never have to take a p mid-race and mid long run again, and it'll help you with pre and post-race fueling and a whole bunch more.

[00:00:50] I'm Darren D Lake, certified running and nutrition coach, sub three hour marathoner and 10 hour Ironman finisher. And since 1996, I've been trying to help and I've been helping a bunch of self coach runners get 1% better each day

because the 1% better runner, let's just run it right here. Focuses on lifelong tools for lasting success.

[00:01:07] We don't do quick fixes and hacks. Let's get into it. Hydration strategies. What is it? Hydration isn't just chugging water really quick before a long race. That's bro science from 2006. You chuck the water before it's terrible for your gut. Hydration is about balance and getting enough fluids and electrolytes without overdoing either one.

[00:01:29] So imagine it's like keeping oil in your car engine, so too little oil in your engine, and the engine seizes up too much. It spills over and messes up the wiring you need. Just the right amount. How to do hydration, electrolytes, right? Let's start with balancing your water intake slowly throughout the day instead of gulping it all down before the run.

[00:01:50] So if you gotta run, you wake up at 6:00 AM you gotta run at 7:00 AM then you can start drinking immediately and don't drink cold water. Cold water in your gut right when it's empty is really, really bad. Try to get room temperature even slightly bit warmer and throw in a bit of salt in there. Bonus, use a electrolyte carb mix drink and you can sip that slowly for the next hour.

[00:02:13] And I'm in the metrics zone here. You can sip 20 to 40 mils. That's literally like that much every two to three minutes, and you'll finish that drink within 20, 30 minutes and your gut will be happy and you'll be nice and hydrated and you won't have to pee so quickly. So for runs longer than 90 minutes or in hot and hum weather, add balance electrolytes with your water.

[00:02:31] So that's that carb mixed drink. Every company makes it. There's cheap ones, there's expensive ones. Get whatever you want. And with the electrolytes here, you need to make sure that they have. Sodium sodium's, the big one, and then magnesium, potassium, calcium, and if you can get some zinc in there, great.

[00:02:45] Don't overdo the zinc though just a little bit. It's fine. I say between 20 and 40 milligrams a day-ish for most people. Don't go over that. Use how thirsty you are as a guide. The old rule of eight to 12 glasses. So two to three quarts or two to three liters is about what you should go for daily. On a normal cool day that you're not training that much, but new studies are showing that the number isn't exact.

[00:03:08] And don't forget the food you eat has water. So different foods have different amounts of water. If you eat a lot of veggies, simple carbs and fruits, then you're gonna probably have way more water intake in you. Your body's really good

at letting you know when it needs water, so experiment with how much you need and feel it all out.

[00:03:25] Another rule is a guideline. A very soft guideline is that your urine, your pee is a lemonade color. You wanna shoot for that right after a long, hot, humid run. If you didn't hydrate properly for the run, you're gonna have very dark pee. That's normal. I like to have it within two to three hours of a hard or long run.

[00:03:41] In a hot day, I like to have. Becoming mostly clear as possible, but if you get your hydration right beforehand, you don't mind going to the bathroom in the middle of the run, then you should be quite hydrated. If you hydrate up during the run, then that's absolutely fine. I'm actually gonna talk about in a second how I over hydrate and then how to not do that, why hydration is so damn important.

[00:04:03] So dehydration can destroy your performance, but here's. The absolutely crazy part over hydrating can be just as bad. It dilutes sodium in your blood leading to a negative condition called hyponatremia, which has similar symptoms of dehydration. It's rare, but it happens especially in marathons when people drink too much in long events.

[00:04:21] People just drink way too much and they flush out all of the sodium and electrolytes. It actually happened to me in my Ironman triathlon back in 2016. I made that rookie mistake of not replacing enough electrolytes properly ended up with severe cramping, even though I was drinking plenty of water. It was like a 65 degree Fahrenheit.

[00:04:40] 21, 22 degree Celsius day. I didn't need that much water. I drank a lot of water on the bike. I flushed out all the electrolytes, and that taught me a crucial lesson about smart hydration, which again, is not just water, it's also electrolytes. So how do you avoid my horrendous situation in my endurance race and nail your own hydration strategy?

[00:05:01] Every single time here is my tried and tested formula for race day hydration. So wake up three to four hours before start time. Yes, I know it's a lot, especially if you've got a 6:00 AM start time, but it's absolutely worth it. Two and a half is fine too if you can get there. But three is best. And begin sipping water immediately.

[00:05:19] Not chugging, like I said before, sipping slowly. Remember, you wanna make it room temperature. Just put some hot water in there. If it was in the fridge before. And that will make it room temperature just steady, consistent sips. So two hours before the start time of the actual race stop drinking. Yes, two hours.

[00:05:35] This gives you time for two, most likely three bathroom breaks. And then you absolutely golden. No more. Porta potty anxiety, waiting out those long lines. No more mid-race emergencies. It's absolutely beautifully simple. Just you, your water bottle and good timing. I've tested this many times in marathons and even shorter distance triathlons and many races, and it works.

[00:06:01] Every time. So when all those other runners are at the bathroom, you'll be focused on your race and you're good to go. You don't even have to pee anymore in the race to make all of that easier for you, I put together something special. So this is the thing I talked about earlier, and if you're tired of trial and error, uh, approach, you can grab my 1% better hydration and fueling guide.

[00:06:19] And it's packed with real world strategies. Comes with a base training plan, six week base training plan. And habits sis, the mental fitness. You need that to become stronger, smarter, 1% better, no fluff, no bro science, all proven evidence-based methods. So you can join 2000 other people that are getting this in their email newsletter.

[00:06:40] 'cause again, I go, come with the VO two max. Come with the mental fitness, the strides, many other things that will hit your inbox. Scan the QR code right here to get access or the link below in the video description. Or if you're listening, open your podcast player, hit up the show notes and get the link.

[00:06:56] So you're sipping smarter now, but sipping only gets you so far, especially on those long runs. When do liquids stop being enough? And when should you actually start reaching for all those hyper neon colored, expensive gels? Energy gels and energy chews, what is it? Energy gels and chews are concentrated.

[00:07:13] Carbs designed to keep you fueled during long runs. Won't go into detail, but usually a mixture of mal Dexter in the high end ones and fructose because your stomach can handle a lot of that. So a lot of people, they go, oh, I'll just gonna eat fruits. You know, real foods. Unfortunately, your body actually can't digest and use that as easily and as quickly as.

[00:07:33] Maltodextrin, which is a very simple sugar. It's fine a couple hours before, a couple hours after, but during an event, you, you really want maltodextrin and fructose and you want a blend of it, and that's why the more expensive energy gels will give you that. So the best way is to pitch your energy gels like jumper cables back to caries for your glycogen tank, your carbohydrate tank.

[00:07:54] You shouldn't need them unless your battery's nearly dead. Or you know, you got the 10 to 20% mark and when you do, the better it be the right type or you'll

fry the whole system. I take them before I need them. That's fine. You need to practice that. But you wanna take them probably about one hour in. If you have a two hour race, maybe 45 minutes in, if you have like a three, four hour race, marathons, five hour race, you could take them every 30, 45 minutes.

[00:08:17] Some people feel sick, you gotta experiment. Like I said, experimenting is the biggest thing with nutrition. Everyone is individual. So how to do it, as I said before. For runs lasting longer than 90 minutes. Easy runs you. You don't need them, I don't think. If you need them, you might wanna sort out your fat adaption and maybe doing some shorter fast runs, or maybe running on less nutrition, maybe eating about two hours before.

[00:08:40] But that's a conversation for another episode. So if you really need them, maybe start them 45 minutes, 60 minutes into a 90 minute run. I'd say you can save your money. You can get. If you want just regular kind of bars that are really quick, you can run with a banana if you want. Take a quick break.

[00:08:55] People run with candy, that's absolutely fine. Anything after 90 minutes, I'd say to start getting decent energy gels and chew. I like the cliff bar, chew 'cause they're less messy gels. If you don't open them right, they sometimes break in your pocket. If you don't take all of them, they fold. They get sticky.

[00:09:09] I hate that sticky miss. So start with one gel every 30 to 45 minutes during a long run, make sure you wash it all down with water. I try not to do sports drink because you're just putting sugar on sugar and then it's actually a dental teeth issue. You're running mouth breathing, you get all the sugar on your teeth.

[00:09:26] You got a cavity mess now. So you just layering on more and more problems. Test different brands and flavors to see what works for your stomach, what you like. Different timing, et cetera. I found the high end ones have a much better blend, and sometimes they throw in caffeine. They just try them out.

[00:09:39] There's so many out there. Why are these gel stings so important? Your body, again, has only 90 minutes of glycogen stored up. As I've said in a previous episode, that's about. 1500 to 2000 grams of carbohydrate glycogen in there. It's just easiest to say that. So after the 90 minutes, your energy tank starts to run dry, and that's when you hit the wall.

[00:09:59] And that wall is actually why people start slowing down and not to get in sports science, but it's an a TP thing. You actually, your body's not able to produce a TP as efficiently, so it slows you down. Your brain is actually like, no, you're trying

to kill me. That's why you slow down. So the gels. Provide carbs to help keep you moving.

[00:10:15] Usually if you're not fit for the event, you can't carb consume your way into your fastest marathon. You gotta train for the marathon. This is just supplemental and helps you. Again, if you're tired of peeing mid-race or mid long run or just anytime on a workout, go and get that free no P Hydration Guide at the QR code right here.

[00:10:35] It also gets you part of a huge bundle, which is a smart 30 day base training plant. The five best No Fridge Foods for recovery. And a daily system to help you with consistency without overwhelm, and you get signed up for that newsletter five minutes or less each week in your inbox. But while you're getting all that, here's the deeper problem that most runners ignore.

[00:10:53] Even if you got gels, electrolytes, and timing all dialed in, if your day-to-day nutrition is off, you still will probably feel flat. No energy, heavy legs, terrible sleep, no recovery. That's why this next episode. Right down here is all about dialing in your macros, supplements, and how to eat without accidentally gaining weight or sabotaging your training.

[00:11:14] Go and get that here, the link below in the video description, or open up the show notes in your podcast player. If you're listening, peace.