

Pre-race prep mitigates the nastier side effects

Vaseline, sun screen are musts for the long run

By Kelly McBride kmcbride@greenbaypressgazette.com May 15, 2008

Running a marathon can be an inspiring, rewarding, uplifting experience.

It also can be downright disgusting.

Twenty-six point two miles can take its toll on anyone in the form of chafing, blisters or race day "accidents."

But experts say sticking to your routines and taking certain precautions can mitigate the gross factor in your marathon experience.

"We really just encourage people to do what they've done on their training runs," said Dr. Jason Hoppe, an internal medicine physician with Prevea who competes in marathons and triathlons. "This week is not a time to be changing anything."

The temptation to change something for race day can be great, Hoppe said, for instance if a runner attends the pre-race expo and sees new shoes or products he or she would like to try.

But doing so on the day of the race can cause blisters, chafing or other unpleasant side effects.

Changing your diet dramatically before or on race day can cause gastrointestinal problems, said Larry Lueck, first-timers director for the Cellcom Green Bay Marathon.

Many runners load up on carbohydrates pre-race, but wolfing down pasta if you're not used to it can negatively affect your body, said Lueck, who has run every Green Bay marathon since the event's inception.

And whether you're a first-timer or a rookie, there's one digestion-related rule that can't be overstated, Lueck said.

"Whenever (you have) the slightest urge to go — take care of the urge now," he said, noting the distance between portable toilets can seem long in an emergency. "If you know that somewhere between mile 13 and 20 it's going to hit you — go take care of it. Take 10 minutes then to save yourself a half hour later."

Other tips for preventing not-so-pleasant post-race side effects include using Vaseline or BodyGlide products on your feet or where skin will rub against skin to avoid blisters and chafing.

Male marathoners who don't wear athletic bras may need special protection against chafing, Lueck said.

"Band-Aids on their nipples, absolutely," he said. "Newbies don't necessarily think about it especially guys wouldn't think about it. You don't think about it and you don't even notice it's happening until it's too late."

Wearing sunscreen on race day also is recommended, experts say as is asking questions if you have concerns. There are two first-timers events scheduled for Saturday for runners with last-minute questions.

"I think it helps when someone like me gets up there and (says), 'Hey, it's normal,'" Lueck said. "If this happens to you, it's happened to others. I think then people relax a little bit."