

Save Your Energy- April 8, 2010

By Eric Lord, MS, CPT



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3 tips to improve your running performance

Energy efficiency has become a buzzword in political and corporate settings. It should be a motto for your training program as well. Common muscle tightness or weaknesses can lead to postural imbalances which will make your body work harder to reach your fitness goals. When your body is efficient you will be able to recover well from each training day and continue to exercise injury free. Here are 3 tips you can use to enhance your energy efficiency:

1. Posture- You may have heard it as a child: "Stand up straight and don't slouch." The same holds true with running. One of the most common postural mistakes I see with runners is looking down at the ground. This posture will cause your neck muscles to fatigue and will pull your chest down, limiting your ability to breath correctly (see post 2). Further down the chain, your hips will have to compensate by balancing out the forward lean of your upper torso.

Runners World has a good article on correcting your running posture which you can find here:

<http://www.runnersworld.com/article/1,7124,s6-238-267-268-8210-0,00.html#>

2. Breathing- Find a mirror and test your own breathing pattern right now. Place a hand on your stomach and a hand on your upper chest. Take 3-5 medium to full breaths and watch what hand moves. If your hand on your stomach moved more, congratulations! You have an efficient breathing pattern. If your hand on your chest moved more it is likely that you are using your neck and upper chest muscles rather than your diaphragm for respiration. This breathing pattern can lead to tension in your upper neck muscles and limit the amount of oxygen you are able to get into your lungs. Practice belly breathing in seated or standing postures, then when you become more proficient with the pattern, practice it on your runs.

3. Hydration- Drinking water before, during and after your runs will greatly enhance your performance and recovery. Keeping yourself hydrated will prevent your connective tissue from drying up and will positively effect your muscle tissue quality and elasticity.

A common theme here is that when muscles are able to do what is asked of them, they respond well to the demands placed on them. These 3 tips, combined with the information from the flexibility article from a previous issue, will help your body stay well and prepare you for your next fun run.

