

WHAT DOES AN ELEVATED HEART RATE REPRESENT?

There is a tremendous amount of discussion floating around these days regarding resting heart rate; however, there is little information regarding what an elevated heart rate means to you as an athlete.

The first discussion point relevant to elevated heart rate is WHAT CAUSES THIS TO HAPPEN. When it comes to the various forms of stress that your body is subjected to on a daily basis, the list is quite long and complex: lack of quality & quantity of food, dehydration, relationships, financial, school, work, quality & quantity of sleep and keeping all of these variables within manageable levels. When you realize that your brain doesn't have a filing system for each form of stress, but rather one large file to handle and address the needs of each form of stress. When you train too hard or too long too often, the body has to handle yet another form of stress and the residual effects associated (i.e. fatigue, inflammation, tenderness, etc.).

There are 2 types of stress:

Eustress: stress that motivates and allows for progression

Distress: stress that causes illness and disease

DAILY SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH LEVELS OF (DIS) STRESS

Typical symptoms associated with stress include:

- Decrease in performance (sprint speed, lasting energy, etc.)
- Increased recovery windows (takes longer for you to recover from your workout or competition and hard training and cross training days)
- Short tempered, impatient with other people
- Lack of motivation to compete & train
- ELEVATED HEART RATE!

LONG TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS IF SYMPTOMS ARE IGNORED

The concept of Adrenal Fatigue (a.k.a. Epstein Barr or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) is applied to individuals that have pushed the body (mentally and physically) too long without adequate rest and nutrition to provide the necessary "tools" to rebuild a body that is resilient to stress.

Four external signs of Adrenal Fatigue:

1. Inability to sleep through the night (even though you are tired)
2. Waking up throughout the night with night sweats
3. Loss of libido
4. Craving simple sugars

Please note, the body doesn't rebuild and get stronger unless it has adequate amounts of sleep (to naturally release human growth hormones – HGH) and high quality food (carbohydrates, protein and fat) to rebuild the body from the inside out – literally. The body that you have today is the result of the food and sleep you have provided your body over the last 6 months. It takes 6 months to completely "rebuild" your body and create the ultimate body that you need and want.

Think about it this way, to have the body that you want in June, starts in January!

The second discussion point relevant to elevated heart rate is **HOW TO IDENTIFY AN ELEVATED RESTING HEART RATE**. Though this sounds odd, many people misidentify what an elevated heart rate actually is (much less what to do when the assessment is correct).

How to capture your resting heart rate the following two ways:

1. Empty your bladder and lay down with a heart rate monitor on for 5 minutes
2. Empty your bladder in a seated position and take your pulse for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 to establish your pulse for 1 minute

The key to accuracy is being consistent on your methodology & consistency. If you are worried about a margin of error, this margin will be essentially eliminated because your measurement methodology is the same over the course of 4 weeks.

Additional Variables to Maintain:

1. Maintain a log of your resting heart rate for a minimum of 4 weeks.
2. Maintain a log of your hours of sleep for a minimum of 4 weeks.
3. Maintain a food log for a minimum of 4 weeks.
4. Maintain a hydration log for a minimum of 4 weeks.

HOW DOES FOOD, HYDRATION AND SLEEP LOG IMPACT YOUR STRESS LEVELS

The body is constantly adapting to the load levels associated with training both on and off of the bike (specifically volume & intensity). Here is a breakdown of food, hydration and sleep as it relates to improved health, wellness and ultimately your on performance:

Food: by consuming raw, real food, you provide your body with the key elements to a stronger and faster body. Through clean eating, you are providing your body the right mixture of carbohydrates, protein and fats.

Carbohydrates: provide your body stored energy (in the form of sugar) in the form of glycogen within your liver and muscles

Protein: the building blocks to re-build torn down muscle tissue

Fats: the necessary nutrient for your nervous system and protection of your internal organs

Hydration: by consuming a minimum of half of your body weight in ounces of filtered water (i.e. 160 pound rider needs to consume 80 ounces of cold filtered water on a daily basis to ensure proper daily hydration levels) will provide your body the necessary volume of water to maintain proper levels of hydration. Please keep in mind that the average body has 96 pints of water within it. Further breakdown of water includes:

Brain: 75% of water

Blood: 85% of water

Muscle: 70% of water

Sleep: when you provide your body a minimum of 8 hours of sleep per night, it has the opportunity to slip into deep levels of sleep (referred to as REM Pattern 3 – this stands for Rapid Eye Movement) which is the depth of rest that your body has to experience before it will release HGH (Human Growth Hormone) naturally. When HGH is released naturally, the body will become stronger and leaner – the reason why sleep needs to be protected at all costs for maximum recovery and improved speeds on the track.

The third discussion point relevant to elevated heart rate is WHAT TO DO WITH YOU'RE TRAINING AND CROSS TRAINING IF YOUR RESTING HEART RATE IS ELEVATED? If you wake up in the morning and your resting heart rate is elevated, follow these guidelines to help offset the negative effects of stress (of any and all kinds):

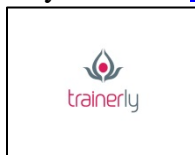
- Morning HR is elevated by +/-1-2 beats, follow your existing training schedule
- Morning HR is elevated by +/-3-5 beats, cut your training volume in half and keep your intensity levels exclusively aerobic (if should be able to talk and/or sing at this intensity level)
- Morning HR is elevated +/-6+ beats, go back to bed and focus on clean eating throughout the day. No training of any kind.

FINAL THOUGHTS....

Your body provides you with four specific external symptoms, not to mention the daily symptoms. By accurately evaluating your daily morning heart rate, you will have a non-emotional evaluation of how your body is dealing with stress. By focusing on consistent and clean eating along with 8-9 hours of sleep, your body will be more prepared to handle the stressors that you are subjected to on a daily basis and in turn grow stronger and ultimately faster!

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