

PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS DURING ULTRA RUNNING



Here we have collected some common issues that may arise during an ultra race, along with possible causes and practical actions that might help in those situations.

This is not a complete overview, and it does not claim to cover everything that can happen. It is simply a shared reference based on experience and practical race situations.

We are not medical professionals, and this should not be seen as medical advice. When something feels serious, unusual, or concerning, medical support should always take priority.

NAUSEA

Possible causes

- Too much energy intake
- Too little energy intake
- Too concentrated sports drink
- Heat
- Dehydration
- Sodium imbalance
- High intensity for too long
- Stress/anxiety
- Sleep deprivation

Suggested actions

- Slow down or walk
- Reduce calorie intake for 30–45 min
- Continue drinking small amounts
- Cool head and neck
- Ice in buff/hat
- Deep breathing
- Mint gum
- Ginger
- Salt capsules/electrolytes
- Cold coke in small sips
- Tooth brushing
- Short reset at aid station

VOMITING

Possible causes

- Stomach overload
- Severe nausea
- Heat stress
- Overdrinking
- Hyponatremia risk
- Intensity too high

Suggested actions

- Stay calm
- Walk
- Cool body
- Small sips only
- Pause calories briefly
- Restart fueling slowly
- Prioritize fluids and sodium carefully

LOW ENERGY / BONKING

Possible causes

- Too few carbohydrates
- Missed fueling window
- Overpacing early
- Long gaps between calories

Suggested actions

- Immediate carbs:
 - gels
 - coke
 - candy
 - sports drink
- Walk while fueling
- Frequent small intake
- Reduce intensity temporarily
- Reassure runner mentally

DEHYDRATION

Possible causes

- Heat
- Underdrinking
- Excess sweating
- GI issues

Suggested actions

- Gradual fluid intake
- Electrolytes
- Cooling strategies
- Reduce intensity
- Monitor urine color and mental clarity

OVERHYDRATION / HYPONATREMIA RISK

Possible causes

- Drinking too much plain water
- Too little sodium intake
- Fear of dehydration

Suggested actions

- Reduce fluid intake temporarily
- Increase sodium/electrolytes
- Monitor mental state carefully
- Seek medical help if symptoms escalate

DIARRHEA

Possible causes

- Excess sugar intake
- Heat stress
- Gut irritation
- Anxiety/stress
- Certain gels or foods

Suggested actions

- Electrolytes/resorb
- Small simple foods:
 - crackers
 - rice products
 - soup
 - blueberries
- Activated charcoal if tolerated
- Reduce intensity
- Avoid large meals

CONSTIPATION

Possible causes

- Dehydration
- Low movement variation
- Too little fiber
- Stress response

Suggested actions

- Increase plain water
- Dried fruit/raisins
- Magnesium
- Walking
- Squatting position
- Gentle stomach massage

ACID REFLUX / HEARTBURN

Possible causes

- Overfueling
- Acidic sports nutrition
- Running intensity
- Too much fluid at once

Suggested actions

- Slow down
- Small sips instead of large drinks
- Stay upright
- Antacids
- Cool the body

HEAT STRESS

Possible causes

- High temperature
- Too aggressive pacing
- Poor cooling strategy
- Dehydration

Suggested actions

- Ice and cooling
- Water on head/neck
- Shade
- Walk climbs
- Cold drinks
- Reduce effort
- Extra sodium if needed

HYPOTHERMIA / COLD

Possible causes

- Wet clothes
- Wind
- Night running
- Fatigue and low calories

Suggested actions

- Dry clothes
- More layers
- Gloves/hat
- Warm drinks
- Heat packs
- Increase movement

BLISTERS

Possible causes

- Moisture
- Friction
- Swelling
- Poor sock/shoe setup

Suggested actions

- Dry feet
- Change socks
- Lubricant
- Tape early
- Drain/protect if necessary

CHAFING

- Possible causes
- Sweat
- Salt buildup
- Wet clothing
- Repetitive friction
- Suggested actions
- Lubricant
- Dry clothes
- Tape/problem protection
- Clean skin if possible

MUSCLE TIGHTNESS / MUSCLE PAIN

Possible causes

- Fatigue
- Overuse
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Mechanical compensation

Suggested actions

- Massage
- Walk breaks
- Poles
- Stretch lightly
- Adjust pace
- Heat or cooling
- Compression

TENDON PAIN

Possible causes

- Overloading
- Poor mechanics
- Downhill stress
- Existing weakness

Suggested actions

- Reduce pace
- Hike climbs/downhills if needed
- Tape/support
- Monitor gait changes
- Reassess regularly

SWOLLEN FEET OR HANDS

Possible causes

- Heat
- Fluid imbalance
- Long duration
- Sodium imbalance

Suggested actions

- Elevate briefly
- Adjust shoes
- Electrolytes
- Cooling
- Monitor swelling progression

SLEEPINESS / MICROSLEEPS

Possible causes

- Sleep deprivation
- Overnight racing
- Energy deficit
- Monotony

Suggested actions

- Caffeine
- Sugar
- Power naps
- Conversation/music
- Cold exposure
- Brighter light
- More movement

HALLUCINATIONS

Possible causes

- Severe fatigue
- Sleep deprivation
- Stress
- Long darkness exposure

Suggested actions

- Stay calm
- Normalize situation
- Increase alertness:
 - caffeine
 - conversation
 - movement
- Short sleep if needed
- Monitor safety closely

EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN

Possible causes

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Hormonal stress response
- Sleep deprivation
- Overwhelm

Suggested actions

- Calm reassurance
- Physical touch if welcomed
- Simplify everything
- Focus only on next step
- Encourage eating/drinking
- Avoid major decisions immediately

PANIC / ANXIETY

Possible causes

- Overstimulation
- Fear spiral
- Exhaustion
- Physical discomfort

Suggested actions

- Controlled breathing
- Calm voice
- Reduce stimulation
- Sit briefly
- Grounding through simple tasks
- Walk calmly before deciding anything

IRRITABILITY / ANGER

Possible causes

- Fatigue
- Hunger
- Pain
- Heat
- Stress

Suggested actions

- Do not escalate
- Keep communication simple
- Give space briefly if needed
- Redirect toward action
- Fuel and cool the runner

RUNNING TOO FAST

Possible causes

- Adrenaline
- Competition mindset
- Poor pacing awareness

Suggested actions

- Walk climbs early
- Monitor heart rate/effort
- Protect fueling ability
- Remind runner of race duration

RUNNING TOO SLOW

Possible causes

- Aid station inefficiency
- Mental lows
- GI issues
- Excess caution

Suggested actions

- Shorter aid station stops
- Problem-solve quickly
- Review cutoffs calmly
- Focus on forward motion

DECISION PARALYSIS

Possible causes

- Exhaustion
- Overwhelm
- Low energy
- Sleep deprivation

Suggested actions

- Crew takes over decisions
- Give only 1–2 options
- Keep tasks extremely simple
- Reduce unnecessary information