

FATIGUE FACTOR

David Crane/Staff Photographer

Members of the Los Angeles Fire Department take a runner for medical treatment Sunday after she finished the Los Angeles Marathon. Thousands of marathon participants are expected to see doctors this week for ailments.

HEALTH: A marathon takes a heavy physical toll, much of it due to poor preparation.

By Susan Abram
Staff Writer

Nursing bloody toenails, swollen tendons, chafed armpits and joint pain, thousands of marathoners will visit doctors and hospitals this week to put their bodies on a speedy recovery course.

Health experts estimate that of the more than 17,000 who crossed the finish line at the Los Angeles Marathon on Sunday, at least 25 percent complained of health effects — much of it from poor preparation.

And many would and should stay home to recuperate.

“Running in a marathon puts a huge amount of stress on all your cells as your blood becomes thicker, and more particulates per unit per volume suck water out of your cells,” said Dr. Darrell Tanelian, president of Health-Connexin Inc., a national company that specializes in training professional athletes.

“Cells get dehydrated, they crinkle up, they don’t work well, and now the whole system is compromised.”

Tanelian said if every molecular cell, from the tip of the nose to the tip of the toes, is properly hydrated — and minerals such as sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium and zinc, which escape from sweat, are properly replenished — recovery is quick.

But local physicians from cardiologists

and podiatrists to sports medicine doctors say they will see a flock of runners following a marathon, and many times it’s because of a lack of knowledge of how their own bodies work.

“What really matters when you’re doing a marathon is when you stop,” said Dr. Lisa Matzer, director of outpatient cardiac services at Glendale Adventist Medical Center.

“Whether you train or don’t train, what really matters when you’re done is what happens when you stop running.”

Matzer said if pulse rates stay high 30

at Olympia Medical Center in West Los Angeles.

“We also see feet that flatten out too much, lower heel problems, sprains and strains,” he said. “It always happens. Proper shoe gear is really important, and in some cases, arch supports.”

“We also tell people a good little trick is to Vaseline their feet so they don’t get blisters. And we recommend they wear two pairs of socks.”

Other physicians anticipate aching muscles.

“I expect a lot of muscle soreness like

the first time someone goes to the gym,” said Dr. Carlo Orlando, of the Arthritis, Orthopedics and Sports and Spine Medical Center in Glendale. “I do frequently see patients that have joint problems, usually in the knee or the leg.”

Despite the pain, marathon runners and trainers say crossing the finish line is addictive, despite the possibility of injury.

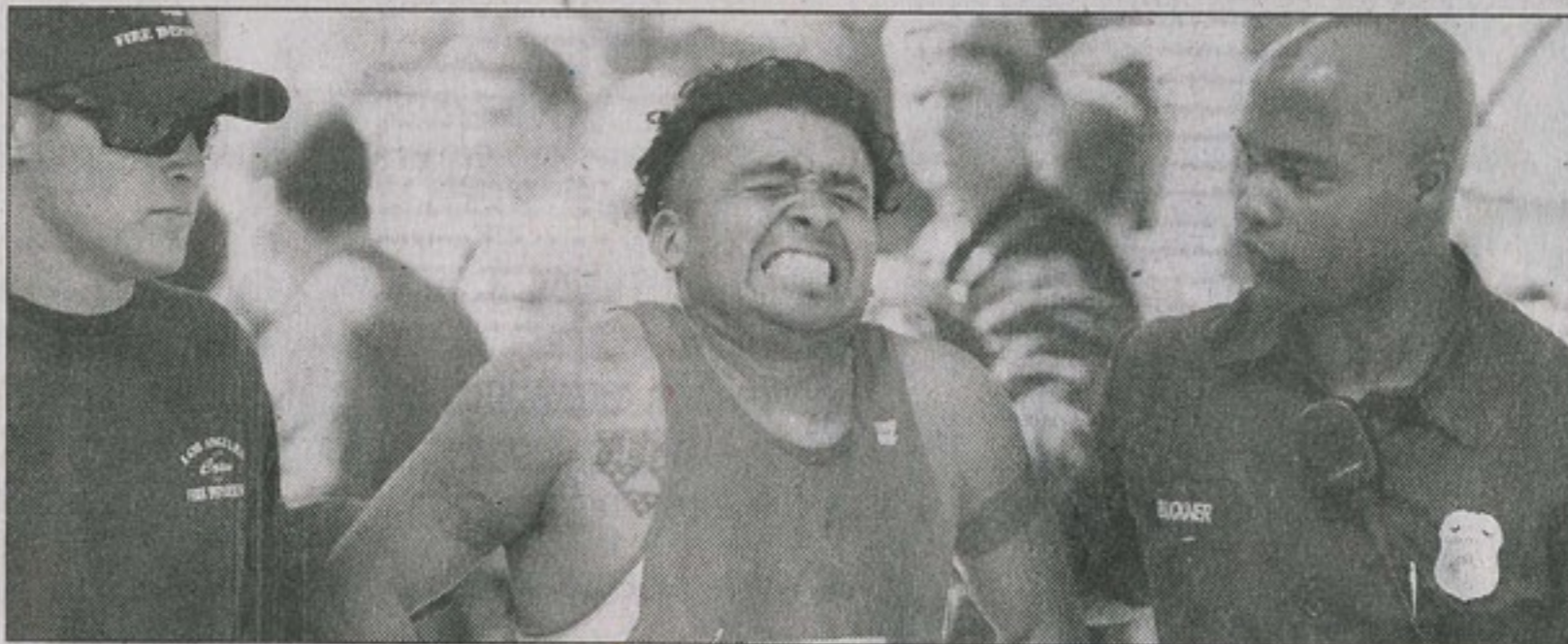
On Sunday, paramedics treated 73 runners, 23 of whom were hospitalized, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

Coach and competitive runner Rusty Snow said average runners question themselves all the time.

“There are people who train to finish a marathon, and people who train to race a marathon,” he said. “I would say 90 percent of the people who run a marathon who finish say, ‘I’ll never do that again.’”

“But 70 percent of those will (actually) do it again.”

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Los Angeles firefighters help one of the many runners feeling the pain to keep walking at the finish line during Sunday’s Los Angeles Marathon.

Photo by Gene Blevins

minutes after crossing the finish line, it is an indicator that the heart muscle isn’t prepared.

Some people lose 15 percent to 20 percent of heart muscle, she said. It takes a week for the heart to repair itself.

“As a heart specialist, we worry about that recovery point,” Matzer said. “They can faint and collapse at the finish line. We lose them after mile 26.”

Doctors also will see a lot of feet this week.

“The most common things are people will have some subungual hematoma, or blood under the toe nail,” said Dr. Steven Schwartz, director of podiatric medicine