

RUNNING is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself, but as in any sport, there can be health and medical risks. Follow these tips to stay safe.

BE POSITIVE. It's one of the more simple rules for the dos and don'ts of running a marathon but be positive. You have done your training, be determined that you will finish.



WEEK/DAY BEFORE RACE

- ✓ **DO taper down well in the last week.** It is better to go into the race under-trained than over-trained. If you've undertrained you can rely on the adrenaline of race day to help you find energy from somewhere. If you've over-trained, once you've gone, you've gone!
- ✗ **DON'T be on your feet all day sightseeing or shopping the day before the race.** It might be tempting to explore or sightsee the day before the race, but this will only leave you tired before you've even stepped on the course.
- ✓ **DO have a gentle run the day before the race.** Two or three miles will not deplete your energy reserves and it will relieve any tension or any pre-race apprehension you may be having.
- ✗ **DON'T** drink beer/wine/malt-beverage/scotch the day before the Marathon. Don't throw away months of training just for a couple cold ones on a Saturday night?
- ✓ **DO get a good book to read or good sleep the night before the race.** It will stop your mind dwelling on the task ahead.
- ✓ **DO eat a balanced meal the night before the race.** The ideal meal needs to include protein, carbohydrate and some fat.



BEFORE & DURING RACE

- ✗ **DON'T run on empty stomach. Take salt before and during runs and races of 10k or longer,** unless salt is contraindicated by your doctor. Ingest common table salt before and during your race to maintain the body's water-to-sodium balance. Take one fast-food salt packet at the start of a race. If you're running a half-marathon or marathon, take another salt packet at the halfway point. After the race, drink a

sports drink that has some sodium, and eat salted foods.

- ✓ **DO stretch.** Get into good habits and remember to go through a programme of stretching after each session of running or exercise. If you don't 'oil the machine', it is likely to seize up just when you need it the most!!
- ✗ **DON'T wear new shoes for the race or run the race in kit that you have not worn before!!** If you run in new kit especially new running shoes you are likely to end up with chaffing and blisters in places that you are not expecting and have to endure that discomfort for a long period of the race! All of your stuff should be tested and tried in the days and weeks before the race. **Check out your gear carefully.** Lay it out three or four days before the race. This ensures you don't forget anything.
- ✓ **DO Grease up.** Vaseline between the legs, under the arms and maybe on toes, if you are blister prone. Use your build up runs and races to get into good habits with using Vaseline and talcum powder in all of the right areas!
- ✗ **DON'T take anti-diarrheal or cold medicines on race day.** These drugs can have a dehydrating effect.
- ✓ **DO drink for thirst.** If you feel thirsty while running or racing, have 4 to 8 ounces of fluid (preferably a sports drink that has some sodium in it) at an aid station or whenever you feel that you need it. If you aren't thirsty, don't feel compelled to drink. If you can't use thirst as a guide, drink no more than a cup (8 ounces) of fluid every 30 minutes. Do not overdrink. Overhydrating can lead to hyponatremia (low blood sodium); this condition can lead to nausea, fatigue, vomiting, weakness, sleepiness, and—in the most severe instances—seizures, coma, and death.
- ✗ **DON'T rely on water alone.** Water is not the best choice for runs that last longer than an hour. An isotonic sports drink not only hydrates but also provides energy and electrolyte salts to offset those lost in sweat.
- ✓ **DO always listen to your body—don't overextend.** Listen to your body. Don't ignore feelings of illness. An "off" or "just not right" feeling can be a sign of a serious medical problem. The marathon medical team is available at the start, almost every 3km along the course, and at the finish. Most runners who spend time at a medical aid station are able to finish the race.
- ✗ **DON'T get carried away in the excitement of the start,** Don't run too fast and 'drop' at some stage. It is always better to be passing people after half way than being constantly overtaken. Stick to your own pace.



IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE RACE

- ✓ **DO keep moving when you cross the finish line.** Stopping the moment you cross the finish line is one of the biggest post-race mistakes you can make. At a minimum you should continue walking slowly for 3-5 minutes to prevent blood from pooling in your extremities (and 5-10 minutes is ideal). Doing so will help lower your heart rate and blood pressure, reduce dizziness, dissipate lactic acid, and minimize the potential for dangerous cardiac arrhythmias.
- ✗ **DON'T get a dynamic stretch or massage right away.** Regardless of their overall views on stretching, nearly all running experts agree that dynamic stretching a fatigued muscle is not a good idea, because of the potential for over-stretching it. This can lead to muscle cramps, strains, or outright pulls – so resist the temptation to stretch right after the race. (Even if you are a regular stretch, avoid it immediately following any training run longer than a half-marathon.)
- ✓ **DO force yourself to eat and drink – Refuel fast.** The bottom line is that your body needs calories within the first 30 minutes after a marathon to both replenish muscle fuel stores and begin rebuilding damaged muscle tissues. Basically, any calories you consume within the first two hours after a marathon quickly will be converted directly into fuel by your starved body. Now, We're not encouraging bad eating habits...but if ever there is a time to splurge, this is it. Research shows that combining carbohydrate with a little protein maximises replenishment. A milk-based drink is a great option.
- ✗ **DON'T take anti-inflammatory medication, starting 24 hours before your race.** These drugs, which include ibuprofen and naproxen, can limit blood flow to the kidneys, increasing the risk of low sodium (hyponatremia). You can start taking them again six hours after the race. Acetaminophen is a safe alternative before and during the race.

THE REMAINDER OF RACE DAY

- ✗ **DON'T take a hot shower or sit in a hot tub or Jacuzzi.** Focus on what's best for your body's recovery, not on what feels good. Taking a hot shower or soaking in a hot tub or Jacuzzi is not good for your body's recovery. The problem is that the moist heat will increase blood flow to your legs, thereby increasing swelling and significantly delaying the healing process. So what should you do?



- ✓ **DO take an ice bath.** Sitting in an ice bath after the race will constrict the blood flow to your legs, thereby decreasing swelling and significantly speeding the healing process. *One quick cautionary note:* reconsider this suggestion if it's cold and/or cool and rainy on race day. By the end of a marathon on even a cool day, your body may be bordering on hypothermia – and jumping in an ice bath could push it over the edge.
- ✗ **DON'T do too much the afternoon of the race.** Once you've cleaned up and eaten, force yourself to relax for a while. You've just trashed your body, so it's time to be nice to it. If you like to take naps, this is the perfect opportunity. If you can't or don't like to nap, at least sit for a while with your legs propped up while you read, watch television, or call all your friends and family to tell them about the race. This will reduce swelling and help the healing process begin.
- ✓ **DO take a short walk later in the afternoon or evening.** After resting and icing your tired, sore legs for a while, force yourself to go for a short walk later in the afternoon or evening. This will keep the circulation flowing to your legs and keep you from getting too stiff.

IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS FOLLOWING THE RACE

- ✓ **DO get that massage now.** What was considered a “don't” right after the race is not only acceptable the day after – it's recommended. Getting a gentle massage approximately 24 hours after a marathon will ease some of the delayed onset muscle soreness (or DOMS, as it's commonly referred to) that will intensify 24-48 hours after the race.
- ✗ **DON'T just sit there.** You can expect to be very stiff and sore for at least 48 hours after the race. (Obviously, the severity will be determined by your fitness level and the intensity of your effort on race day.) To help combat this, go for short, gentle walks the 2-3 days following the race.
- ✓ **DO address your psychological recovery needs as well.** This is undoubtedly the most overlooked aspect of marathon recovery. It's easy to recognize that your body needs time to physically recover from the race (pain is a WONDERFUL reminder). What's less obvious is that you need to allow for psychological recovery as well. Many marathoners (especially first-timers) often experience a sense of depression after the initial euphoria of finishing the race subsides. To help you better recover psychologically, consider doing one or more of the following:



- Reconnect with family members, friends, and pets – all of whom probably spent less time with you during your training regimen.
- Keep active, albeit at a reduced level of intensity, to feed your psychological need for working out.

✱ **DON'T do too much, too soon.** The final and most important rule of recovery: The last thing you want to do is lose all of the wonderful conditioning you've gained training for and completing a marathon. However, trying to do too much, too soon after a marathon is a recipe for injury or illness. We recommend short, easy walks and low impact cross-training activities (such as light swimming, easy bike rides, or short workouts on the elliptical machine) for at least a week after the marathon. Depending on how you're feeling after a week, you can incorporate slow, easy jogs back into your routine – just monitor your soreness and fatigue levels. If you find that the easy jogs are taking too much out of you, don't hesitate to go back to walking and cross training for another week.



SMART + CAUTIOUS = SAFE

The recovery stage, like all stages of a marathon training plan, is highly individualistic and idiosyncratic: what works for one runner may not work for another. However, following these general Do's and Don'ts will force you to err on the side of caution, hopefully avoiding the injuries and illnesses that being overly aggressive will lead to.



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