

MARATHON TRAINING: RACE WEEK & RACE DAY TIPS

RACE WEEK:

- Stay hydrated throughout the entire week leading up to your race but don't waterlog yourself.
- Eat well and shift your diet to more carb centric the last few days if you don't already. To avoid stomach issues during the race, stay away from high fiber foods 1-2 days before your race.
- SLEEP, SLEEP, SLEEP! If you're like most of us you probably won't sleep that well on the eve of your race so make sure you get extra sleep the 3-4 nights before. This extra energy will be extremely valuable on race day.
- Very little running with at least a 1-2 day break from running the days before your race. Again, rest is your friend and will turn into much needed energy on race day. Your body has been pushed over the last few months and this is the recovery you need to perform your best on race day.
- Don't stick around the expo forever and leave the sightseeing to a minimum. You don't want to be on your feet for hours the day before your race. Remember that rest translates into race day energy.
- Eat dinner fairly early, especially if you're at a big marathon and you're staying in town. Every Italian restaurant is going to be packed on race eve so if you think you'll eat at 7:00 then go out to find out that they have an hour wait you'll be eating closer to 9:30. We go out early and when we leave the restaurant there are always lines of people waiting to get in.
- Take it easy on the alcohol the days leading up to your race. Too much alcohol can dehydrate you and zap that energy you've been storing up during your taper. On race eve many of us will drink a glass of wine or a beer with dinner because it helps us sleep a little better. Just remember, most of us will be out running for 3+ hours and don't want to sabotage the fitness that we've been building for 16+ weeks. Save the cocktails for the next night.
- Eat throughout the day before the race. Carry snacks, and water with you. You want to eat a nice carb centric dinner the night before but you don't want to gorge yourself and go to bed with stomach issues. Just eat low fiber, high carb foods throughout the entire day and make sure you drink plenty of water.
- Clip those toenails at the beginning of the week. If you clip a nail a little low you'll have time for it to heal before your race.
- Stay loose throughout the week by walking and moving a little every day but no extra workouts or chores to fill that downtime. Crouched over yard work will kill your quads. Lifting heavy furniture can hurt your back, shoulders, or legs. NO EXTRA/OTHER CARDIO workouts this week. REST means REST!

RACE DAY:

- Most important things to do in the morning: eat, drink and "GO!" Try to eat a nice low fiber breakfast that you're already used to eating. Nothing new on race morning! If you're at a hotel make sure you pack your favorite breakfast. Eating about 1.5-2 hours before your start time is ideal. Drink water but don't over drink because you don't want to flush out all of your electrolytes or feel bloated. Many runners still drink their morning coffee because they're used to it and it helps get things moving in their digestive system.
- Try to relax. You will most likely be nervous, excited and full of adrenaline but those things use up your stored energy. When the jets fly over, the Star Spangled Banner plays, and you hear music over the loudspeaker, take it all in but don't get to amped up. You're going to be excited which is great and part of the experience but just take some deep breaths and take in the moment. High five some kids along the route, enjoy the cheers, laugh at all the funny signs, chat with your fellow runners, thank the volunteers but don't use too much energy on things other than running.
- Move while you're waiting for the race to start. Walk in place, do light moving stretches (no deep static stretching before the race), loosen your shoulders, arms, back, neck, and hips as well. If you're tense it will throw off your form and most likely slow your pace while using more energy.
- Have a nutrition/hydration plan. If you know there's a water stop every 2 miles then decide which ones you'll drink water, which ones you take fuel, when you'll drink Gatorade, etc. A good rule of thumb is to take in about 150-200 calories an hour starting about 35-45 minutes into your race. Always follow your gel with water and don't ever take it with Gatorade. That's too much simple sugar at once for your body

to take in. If you drink Gatorade, understand that those calories and electrolytes are going into your body too.

- Water: Remember that there's only about 3-5oz of water in each of those little cups. I usually drink 1.5-2 cups at every water stop but each person needs to decide for themselves. Know that you will need to drink more if it's hot. You'll hear suggestions for a certain number of ounces per hour and some experts say to drink when you're thirsty. The problem with the second suggestion is that works best if you carry your own water and you really have to pay attention to your thirst and don't ignore it. If you're relying on water stops then make sure you get enough in but also be aware of electrolyte replacement. If you take in too much water but don't replace sodium and electrolytes then you can get water logged. Dehydration is much more common than hyponatremia but hyponatremia is much more dangerous. Hyponatremia is low blood salt level due to abnormal fluid retention from overdrinking. Approximate ounces. Sub 4 hour marathoners: 10-12oz per 20 minutes, 4-5 hour 8oz/20 minutes, 5+ hour 4-6oz/20 minutes. Going on thirst is still the best because the specific ounces theory is based on weight, effort, etc.
- This one is from Heidi and most of you have experienced this. Get to your race early. It's much better to have some downtime and without rushing around. Just remember to stay warm before your race and have some water to sip on and maybe a little bland snack as well.

Clothing:

- Usually want to dress for about 20 degrees warmer than the race temp but you don't want to be cold before you start. Usually a long sleeve "throw away" shirt over your race clothes will keep you warm pre-race. You can pitch it just before or anywhere after you start. They'll donate all these clothes to charity. Gloves and/or a hat are good until your hands can stay warm without them is a good idea even if you're wearing a tank and shorts. These are guidelines everybody has different comfort levels.
- BODY GLIDE, feet (and in-between toes), groin on guys, inside thighs, under arms where your shirt rubs, chest on guys (or nip guards/ Band-Aids)
- No new clothes or shoes! Wear what you've been training in. This will prevent/reduce chafing, blisters (feet from new socks/shoes), etc.

MENTAL:

- No matter how experienced you are, race day brings nerves with it.
- Breathe and relax before the race.
- Steady breathing during the race, drop your pace a bit if your breathing is labored. You really shouldn't be going into oxygen deprivation during a marathon, so if it does, slow down a bit and take some nice big breaths in. Oxygen is your muscle's friend.
- When you hit a rough patch remember to TRUST YOUR TRAINING! You did all that work over 16+ weeks and your body is ready for race day. You need to believe in yourself and know that you've got it. As long as you hydrate and fuel throughout the race, you should be physically fine so make sure your brain is your friend. If you're having a serious physical problem you'll know it and should seek help immediately but for everything else just believe in yourself because you're AWESOME! Focus on breathing, your form, and Billy and Jan griping at you for not wearing bright clothing on a training run. If your brain is going to a bad place then go high five a little kid or smile and thank the person handing you that cup of water. The littlest thing can turn that despair around almost immediately. A marathon can be a long mental rollercoaster so remember that when you're down, you'll be back up soon.