



Prevention Treatment Performance

Time to get ready for race day

14 days to go

To make sure you have the energy to complete the race you should start to “taper” your training off in the 10-14 days before race day to make sure your body is rested and ready to go. The harder you have trained the longer period you need for tapering. At this stage cramming in extra sessions in the hope of making yourself fitter is more likely to cause an injury and may result in you not completing the race at all. Now is too late to worry about whether you trained enough over the last 3 months.

Hopefully you will have been keeping a record of the volumes (how far) and intensity (how hard) of each run over the training period. This makes it easier to work out what to do in the taper period. Research varies about how much you should taper or reduce the training volume:

1. Between 41% – 61% of volume, with no change in frequency or intensity in the two weeks before an event
2. In the 10 days before the race you drop from 80% to 60% in the last week and within the last 4 days only do 40% of your training volume but don't forget to include the race day mileage in your last week volume calculation!

The important point is to reduce your overall load. Lots of runner's advocate running at race pace but much shorter distances in the last week. This helps you to tune your body to the pace you want to go at on the day but not get fatigued. You won't get any fitter at this point so better to go in to race day less fit but with more energy in the tank.

If you have a niggle at this stage, some sports massage or physio might make all the difference so don't ignore your body. On the days of the last few longer training runs experiment with what food you eat the night before, timing of breakfast and what you run well on. This is the time to work out what suits you and what does not.

The few days before the race

During the week of the race avoid any heavy gym work. In those 4 days before the event your longest run should be no more than 25% of the longest run you have done. Some runners like to remind their leg muscles how to run quickly just before an event so may add a few quick runs to their last training session 3-5 days before, however, remember all your training is complete so a last run will tire you out not make you fitter.

You may feel quite anxious or excited about the race day particularly for those participating in their first long distance event so a very light jog and some dynamic stretching exercises can help to relax the body but try to

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stay off your feet the night before, so that your legs are fresh for the run. Many people visiting a new city do the tourist activities the day before, but this is not advisable!

In much the same way as you should not change your routine in the days before, it is not advisable to change what you eat. The mantra of carb loading may suit some but leaves others feeling sluggish. Do what you know from training. Try to avoid high fibre which can cause stomach upsets; high fat meals and especially alcohol! Maintaining hydration is key both before and during the race. Unless you have tried them before, don't be tempted by glucose type gels or energy drinks as they can upset your stomach. Stick to what you know.

Fail to prepare is to prepare to fail!

- Check the weather – if it is an early start look at temperatures for later in the day when you will have warmed up and so will the atmosphere.
- Check the route to the venue – check for traffic problems and parking arrangements
- Make sure you have your race number (safety pins), registration documents, warm clothes, vaseline, snacks, fluids
- Charge your watch or ipod if you use one
- Take a bin bag for your warm kit but make it stand out!
- Take a carbohydrate-based snack eg. banana or cereal bar) and sports drink to top up on between breakfast and the race start. Don't try anything new.
- Get a good night's sleep – make sure you bank some sleep over the week of the race

On the day – stick to what you know

- Wake up 3 hours before the start
- Arrive in plenty of time so you don't feel rushed
- Eat your normal pre-long run breakfast at least 2 hours before the start. Don't suddenly change your routine.
- Don't add new stretches or a free massage unless your body is used to it.
- Don't wear new clothing as these can chafe and rub making your run uncomfortable and potentially painful.
- Do your normal warm up and if there is a delay try to keep warm on a colder day
- Stick to your pace not the speed of the pack. Write your split times on your hand and stick to them.
- Avoid the edges of the road where the camber is uneven.
- Don't take on more fluid than normal, as it will slosh around in your tummy
- Try to take time to breathe, enjoy and smile – you may be on camera!
- After the race indulge in some carbohydrate rich food with plenty of protein as soon as possible to start the recovery process.

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