



START LINE

14 TIPS FOR YOUR MARATHON D – DAY

1 TAPER: Tapering before a race is reducing the amount and intensity of your training in the weeks prior to your event to ensure you peak for that event. This is necessary to allow full recovery of the shock absorbing capacity of the trained muscles. The general advice given from studies states that training should be reduced by 30% the second to last week before a marathon and that you should run only 30% of the usual weekly total distance in the last four days of the last week before the race. For the last 3 days it is suggested running only 2-5km daily.

2 PACE: Hopefully having run a series of shorter distance races in your preparation for the marathon, you will have an idea of what your marathon time will be and from that can plan your pace for the race. Having decided on the time you are expecting to run the marathon and the pace you will be setting, you can plan ahead and calculate your split times for 1km, 8km, 10km, 16km, 32km – this will help you stay on track during the day as well as aid in your pre-race mental strategy.

3 CARBOHYDRATE LOADING: For marathon distances research has shown that it is clearly beneficial to carbohydrate load before the race, eat a

pre-race breakfast and ingest carbohydrate during the race. It is advisable to do a little of all three of these to ensure that premature carbohydrate depletion, especially a low glucose concentration, does not cause you to run slower with more discomfort than necessary. The loading phase should last only three days, during which you should eat mostly complex carbohydrates. Eat 500-600g of carbohydrate eat day during this phase, in practice take in some form of carbohydrate-loading drink as it is difficult to eat 500g of carbohydrates on a normal diet. As valuable as the pre race day preparations are, so is eating a good breakfast before the race and ingesting carbohydrates during the marathon. The most important thing is to test out your pre-race breakfast and any supplements (gels, energy bars, fruit, drinks) you will be consuming on the day during your training days. It is essential to ensure that you are able to tolerate different carbohydrates/supplements, bearing in mind some may give you diarrhoea, constipation, a stitch, stomach cramps, and flatulence.

4 MENTAL PREPARATION: The reason why you should run progressively longer distances in both training and racing before attempting a marathon, is to convince your mind that your body can indeed go

the distance. Research has shown that a large component of fatigue experienced during prolonged exercise may result from a reduced central drive from the brain to keep recruiting enough muscle during exercise. Fatigue is not wholly physiological, caused by muscle fatigue/damage or glucose depletion. There is a central (brain) component. It is not fully understood how much of this is under conscious control. So, in training and preparing for the marathon build up confidence to help ensure you are able to go the distance, thus pre-programming your 'central governor' (brain).

5 DRIVE THE COURSE: Know the location, severity and distance of the uphill and downhill, especially in the last 12km of the race and commit them to memory. It will help in your mental preparation before the race and allow you to concentrate during the race, achieving small goals along the route as you reach each climb.

6 EAT THE RIGHT FOOD THE DAY BEFORE THE RACE: As discussed in point 3 this is essential to ensure that both the muscle and liver glycogen stores are 'full' and premature fatigue will not result from hypoglycaemia.

7 ASSEMBLE YOUR GEAR: Ensure everything is laid out the night before the race. Your favourite socks comfortable shirt and shorts. Don't try new items of clothing (and especially not shoes) on race day! Ensure any food items you will be carrying with you are assembled and packed into your shorts pockets or on a lightweight energy belt. Again run with the belt in training to ensure comfort if you are planning on using one for the marathon.

8 REST: Do not spend too much time on your feet during the final 24 hours before a marathon. It is far better spending the day relaxing, reading, watching television or doing whatever physically undemanding activities you prefer.

9 DRESS APPROPRIATELY: There is nothing worse than trying to run your best when you are cold. Shivering burns energy that could rather be spent on running faster. A good safety procedure is always wear extra clothing to the race start if you are in any doubt about the weather. An extra T-shirt or long sleeve top can easily be discarded as it warms up later in the day. If there is any risk of rain, it is important to wear a rainproof outer garment. Wet clothing is an excellent conductor of heat, increasing the risk of hypothermia, especially when running slowly and in windy conditions. Lean runners, especially women, with little muscle bulk, are at greater risk. A large refuse bag / bin liner with holes cut out for your head and arms will even suffice if you are unwilling to discard a waterproof jacket along the route.

10 WAKE UP THE RIGHT WAY, EAT THE RIGHT BREAKFAST: Try to avoid a loud jarring alarm clock, rather have someone nudge

“I'M NOT TELLING YOU IT'S GOING TO BE EASY...BUT I AM TELLING YOU IT'S GOING TO BE WORTH IT “

you gently awake, followed by your favourite early morning drink. Repeat some positive self statements and do some deep breathing and stretching exercises. Smile and generally get yourself into a happy, humorous frame of mind. Avoid thinking about the race too much as this will produce anxiety and high levels of arousal too early in the day. Your pre-race breakfast should contain easily digestible carbohydrates (bread, cornflakes, sugar, honey) and must be eaten at least 2 to 3 hours before the race starts.

11 PREPARE FOR THE START: A large race with many athletes and starting batches can be overwhelming. Prepare for this by knowing when and where to be, and getting to the race early to ensure there is no unnecessary stress or panic. At the start of the race, being a 'pack mentality', you may be pushed along at a faster or slower pace than planned – use the first 2-3 km as a warm up and to settle, then adjust yourself to the pace necessary to successfully complete your race.

12 STAY OPTIMALLY HYDRATED: Once you have settled into a comfortable rhythm remember it is essential to drink the correct solutions in the appropriate volumes during a marathon. Drinking is important not only to combat dehydration and hyperthermia, but also to prevent hypoglycaemia, hence the need for carbohydrate solutions. General advice is

to drink about 400-800ml of carbohydrate-electrolyte sports drink each hour during a marathon. The lesser amount would be for smaller athletes, including mostly women. If you are a slow runner and start to walk predominantly you may need to reduce the volume intake to 200-400ml per hour. Dehydration is commonly the concern during longer races, however the risk of water intoxication (overhydrating), a medical condition known as hyponatraemia, can also be serious.

13 AFTER THE RACE: After the marathon the immediate priority is to drink sufficient liquid to correct dehydration and sodium chloride losses that may have occurred. This ensures the kidneys increase their urine production as soon after the race as possible and is especially important for faster runners. Slower runners who have drunk adequately during the race may even be slightly overhydrated and therefore may not need to replenish themselves as aggressively. The general rule is that regular urine output/passing urine should be restored within six hours of completing the race. If not medical attention should be sought to avoid any kidney issues. Replenishing your glucose stores is essential to aid recovery. Although you may have a suppressed appetite for a few hours after the race try to eat a meal.

14 MOST IMPORTANTLY OF ALL ENJOY YOURSELF Most importantly of all enjoy yourself: take the time to appreciate the sentiment of the day and the efforts of your fellow competitors. Each of you will have had a unique journey to get to where you are and it's there to be celebrated.

