



Running a marathon is a test of spirit, physique and endurance. You need to spend months preparing your body to a tailored programme that suits your lifestyle. A simple Google search will offer plenty of material for your fitness training, however there are many other factors to consider to ensure you complete your run uninjured and in a realistic time. From our lovely partners at Kent Leisure Training, Dynamix Sports Nutrition and Folkestone Sports Massage Therapy come 10 winning tips and wise words of advice in preparation for what could be one of the biggest challenges of your life.

#1 - DIET

A **higher protein diet** is seen as beneficial in aiding muscle recovery and adaptation to your training schedule. Recommended levels are 1-1.6g/Kg of body weight/day, so the average 84Kg male would require 84-134g of protein per day, and the average 70Kg female, 70-112g. To put this into perspective, there is approximately 22g of protein in a chicken breast, 5g per egg, and 20g in spaghetti Bolognese.



Although the spotlight is now on protein, **carbohydrates** are still important, as they are the primary fuel for your body during a marathon. During your training, this will give you the energy you need to prevent fatigue and to fuel your recovery.



During recovery, you should try to consume **higher GI (glycaemic index) foods**- these tend to be sweeter or whiter foods, such as parsnips or white bread within the first couple of hours after exercise to kick start your recovery. Following this, you should stick to **lower GI foods**, which are generally less sweet and browner, such as broccoli and wholemeal bread. Your overall intake of carbs per day should be 7-12g per Kg of body weight- that's 588-1008g for the average male, or 490-840g for the average female, per day. Fat content should be kept at an average consumption- around 30% of your diet- too little fat will mean a lack of a valuable energy source and too much fat leads to compromising carb/protein intake.





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#2 - HYDRATION

Fluid intake is key for your training and the completion of a marathon. Our bodies are around 70% water, which is needed for cellular functioning (including energy production!), ease of blood flow and maintenance of body temperature- particularly important in hotter climates. The idea of hyperhydration (drinking more than what your body requires at that time) before an event is no longer seen as good pre-race practice, due to the increase in deaths from overconsumption of fluids during long distance events. It is now suggested that you should listen to your body- if you feel thirsty, you are thirsty so drink. On average you should **consume between 400-800ml per hour**, depending on your size and speed and the environment- that's about 1 bottle of water per hour. Fluid intake can also be used to take in essential simple carbohydrates and sodium, through **isotonic drinks** which will help to keep your energy levels up through the race.



#3 - SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements have their place when training for any sport or event. When we choose to consume these supplements is key. **Whey protein** should be consumed before and immediately after any training session, the reason we need Whey is due to its **ultra-fast absorption rate**. Protein should be consumed at a ratio of 4 carbohydrates to 1 protein. By consuming this ratio of both nutrients we are ensuring efficient uptake and absorption. By doing this we ensure our bodies stay in a positive nitrogen balance and enable efficient recovery.

Consuming a **complex carbohydrate supplement** can also be helpful as it will lower the volume of solid foods required, making it easier to digest the high amount of fuel for an endurance event over 90 minutes.

One of the most beneficial supplements for recovery is a product called **L-Glutamine**. This is an amino acid which is required by our bodies for a number of functions. L Glutamine helps improve endurance, recovery and weight management so a perfect addition when preparing for any endurance based sport.

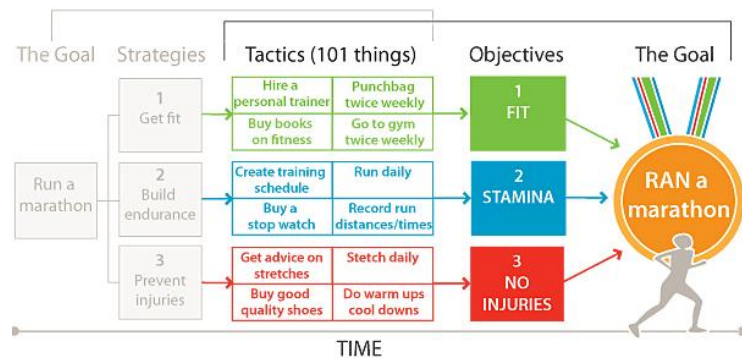




#4 - GOAL SETTING

You probably already have a goal as to what you want to achieve when the big day comes round- sub 2 hours, 3 hours, 4... just to make it to the finish?! Whatever your goal, this overall aim should shape your training and the progress you make.

Once you have a realistic goal in sight, you should start to think about how you will reach this. You should aim to break your training down into stages- what do you hope to be able to achieve after four, eight or twelve weeks of training? You should also aim to complete a shorter distance organised race before your marathon. This gives you a mid-term goal to aim for as well as readying you for an organised race scenario. Any goals you make should be specific to clearly identify what you want to achieve and be specific to the area of fitness you are focussing on- a certain distance, time or pace to maintain for example. They should be measurable- what will you use to measure your improvements? Distance if you are just looking to complete the marathon, or time for a specified distance if you are looking to improve speed. Your goals should be achievable. You should look at your current level of fitness or progress so far- what is a realistic goal that you will be able to reach within the time you have set yourself? If you stick to these simple rules of goal setting and set small, regular targets, you are far more likely to stay focussed and motivated.



#5 - RESISTANCE TRAINING

Resistance training improves running economy, strengthens the tendons and ligaments surrounding joints and reduces the risk of injury. Your resistance training should focus on muscular endurance (characterized by the build up lactic acid in the muscles, leading to the burning sensation in muscles felt during more intense exercise), including 2-3 sets of 12-15 reps, focusing on upper (particularly shoulders and arms) and lower body, as well as the core muscles, including abs, lower back and obliques. Lunges are a fantastic exercise for increasing both core and leg strength, affecting joints and muscles directly applied to running. These exercises will help you during the times when you need to put in the extra effort, such as hill runs and during that final push.





#6 - INTERVAL TRAINING

When you start training, it is important to establish baseline fitness to reduce your chance of injury and to prepare your body for more intense training sessions. Once this has been established, you can start taking part in more high intensity exercise. Interval training is an excellent alternative to continuous training that allows you to train your cardiovascular base during active recovery between high intensity activities that stresses your muscular endurance allowing you to work at higher intensities for longer during your training session, maximising adaptations through your sessions. As well as these benefits, interval training can help to keep you interested and motivated, giving you new goals to work towards within a different dimension of your training. Beginners should start on a 2:1 rest to work ratio, working up to a 1:2 rest to work ratio, decreasing your rest times as you progress.

#7 - VARIABILITY

Variety is the spice of life, no more so than when working towards fitness goals. Varying the activities you do throughout your training week will help you psychologically as well as physically. Psychologically, it will keep you motivated, giving you sessions that you will look forward to, and allowing you to set different goals to achieve as your training progresses. Doing different types of activity sessions will train different areas of fitness, leading to improvements in overall fitness. Your training intensity should vary throughout your programme. You should build up to higher intensities, and as you get closer to your event, and as rest becomes more important, you should include a tapering off period in the last 3 weeks, where training duration decreases. You should also vary the speed at which you run during your training, to include your race pace, less intense active recovery speed and a faster training pace to ensure you are overloading your body for greater adaptations.

#8 - REST



Rest is more important than your training sessions. If you break it down, the time you spend training is just a fraction of your day so it is important that you plan and use down time to maximise recovery. Sleep is an important factor here, so it is vital you get your recommended number of hours in- around 7-9, although this is dependent on you and how much sleep makes you feel most productive and alert. This will not only make you feel more energised and psychologically put you in a



better frame of mind, it will also reduce your risk of injury, increasing your ability to concentrate. Rest days should be included in your weekly training plan and should be interspersed throughout the week. Studies have shown that a 4-day-week programme is as effective as a 6-day-week programme, so 4-5 days a week of training should be sufficient, doing no more than three days training in a row. This time is vital to allow your body to adapt to the stresses you are putting on it.

#9 - SPORTS MASSAGE

Incorporating sports massage by a trained and trusted (registered) therapist into your training benefits it in many ways. Make sure on your first visit that the therapist is aware of your marathon training and when race day is. This will ensure that the treatment you receive will be bespoke to your needs.

Benefits of sports massage include encouraging blood and lymph flow to remove toxins post-activity, encouraging muscle repair, and improving flexibility through additional stretching techniques. Regular massage will help to break down some of the scar tissue from current and/or previous injuries that may be affecting the performance of your muscles, ligaments, and tendons so that you can continue training with less limitation. If you regularly see a therapist, they may find small areas of micro trauma in the muscle before you have noticed an injury occurring. The therapist can then treat and help you prevent further damage by finding the cause and advising your recovery. Massage also promotes the release of endorphins which will act as natural painkillers while reducing some of the pain associated with your heavy training schedule. Treatment should vary from one session to the next dependant on the individual. Pre-race massage will be kept fairly light in order to prepare you physically and mentally while massage the week before may be more deep tissue focusing on areas of micro trauma.





#10 - FOOTWEAR

Finding the correct running shoes for you is especially important if you want to stay injury free. Shoes have an average life of around 400 miles so if yours are nearing that sort of wear or will be older come race day then replacing them now could be the key to performing well. If you are new to running it may be beneficial to visit a specialist who can examine your gait and biomechanical traits in order to help guide you as to which footwear will best suit your needs. Adequate support and cushioning can be essential to prevent ongoing injuries such as tendonitis and 'shin splints'.

Having a second pair of running shoes is a good idea as you will run slightly different in each pair, dispersing force differently throughout the body. Chronic overuse injuries that can build up over time can sometimes be avoided by alternating with a second pair and it's always handy to have a 'worn in' pair if the others get wet and lose shape. Never wear new trainers on race day- when you change trainers you can expect slight 'niggles' for a few weeks until your feet have got used to the support type. Finally, find a pair that feels comfortable- trainers should be well fitting and not cause blisters or calluses!

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