



Our guide to a fit, happy and healthy

great run

Running is great for your health and over the past 30 years more than a million people have completed a Great Run. However, running doesn't suit everyone so it's important that you read carefully the information here to make sure you have done all the training you need to and are fit to take part in the event.

FIT TO COMPETE?

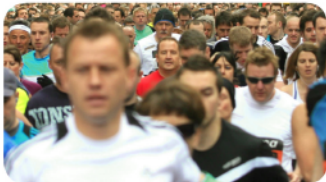
It's important to train properly for your run otherwise you will be at risk of injury. Here are some tips that will help ensure you enjoy your training safely.

1. Before you start any training programme, make sure you're healthy enough to run. Talk to your doctor if you have a long-term health condition that may affect your ability to exercise, such as:

- heart disease
- asthma
- diabetes
- epilepsy
- arthritis

If you start your training programme and find that you feel unwell, see your doctor, especially if you:

- have heart palpitations
- feel lightheaded, dizzy or faint
- have chest pain or tightness
- get excessively short of breath
- get excessive wheezing or coughing
- have severe joint or muscle pain



2. Start your training slowly and build up gradually, especially if you haven't exercised for some time. Allowing yourself recovery time is also important when training. This is when your body gets stronger and fitter: if you don't allow time for your body to recover, you may weaken your performance and feel tired. Muscle aches and pains happen most commonly after an increase in training, and stress on your lower limbs can cause injuries.



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3. Give yourself time to warm up and cool down before and after your run. Warming up allows time for your body to prepare mentally and physically for the exercise you're about to do. A good warm up should include activity that slightly raises your heart rate followed by stretching. This increases the blood flow to your muscles, improves flexibility and prepares your muscles. Cooling down after your run helps to reduce muscle soreness and stiffness.

4. To reduce your risk of injury, vary your routes, running surface, pace and distance. Ideally, swap between two pairs of shoes on alternate training days.

5. Face oncoming traffic and stay visible, especially when it's dark – for example, wear bright or reflective clothing.

HYDRATION



It's important that your body stays hydrated – keeps the right level of water – so that it can function properly. You also need enough water to allow nutrients to be transported around your body.

The colour of your urine can be a helpful indicator of hydration. Generally, dark urine suggests dehydration, with pale, straw-coloured urine being ideal. If you don't usually drink caffeinated drinks, don't start now as they can be particularly dehydrating if you aren't used to them.

In general, drink when you feel the need and don't gulp large volumes of fluids before, during or after a race – this can result in a condition called hyponatraemia. This happens when the salts in your body are diluted too much and can cause confusion, disorientation and vomiting.

Before your run

Start the race well hydrated. Drink enough fluids in the week leading up to the race and in particular the day before the event to ensure that you're properly hydrated. Alcoholic drinks can be dehydrating, so don't drink them less than 24 hours before a race.

Choose water or a sports drink such as Powerade. Stick to drinking whatever you have practised with during training.

During your run

During strenuous exercise, you can lose between half a litre and two litres of water per hour as sweat. It's important to replace the fluid and salts you lose.

Everyone is different; some people sweat more than others, and some lose more salt in their sweat. Because of this individual variation, it's not possible to give exact advice on how much you should drink during a training session. As a general rule, aim for 120 to 150ml of cold fluid every 10 to 15 minutes. Cooler fluids are recommended because they are usually more palatable and help to lower your core body temperature.

Make sure you know where the drink stations are on the race route. Aqua-Pura water and Powerade will be available, but only take a drink if you need one. If it's hot, there will be extra water and showers may be available – use these to cool yourself rather than pouring drinking water over yourself.

After your run

Most runners don't drink enough during a race and need to rehydrate afterwards, so take on some fluid as soon as you can after crossing the finish line. Although you may feel like celebrating, make sure you're fully hydrated with water or squash before you have any alcohol.



ARE YOU PREPARED FOR YOUR DISTANCE?

To take part in your event without risking your health, you need to be able to comfortably run the distance. This means you should feel you could run a bit more at the end of the race. As a guide, during the weeks before your race aim to have run:

- 7 to 8km continuously if taking part in a 10km run
- 8 miles continuously if taking part in a 10 mile run
- 11 miles continuously if taking part in a half marathon

If you can't manage this distance, you may not be able to complete the event safely and probably won't enjoy it. Please do not run this time.



EATING

During training

The best advice when training is to stick a healthy, balanced diet. If you do this, you will be getting all the nutrients you need to exercise regularly, so you won't need to take vitamins or other supplements to improve your running.

On training days, have a meal about three to four hours before you run if you can. This should be low in fat and fibre and high in carbohydrate, and include some protein. Then have a snack half an hour to an hour before your training.

Try to eat some starchy food within two hours of finishing long training runs and after the race – your muscles can replace energy (glycogen) twice as quickly during this time.

The week before your run

It's very important both in the days before your race and during it that you stick to food and drink that you have tried before. Don't start trying lots of new foods as it may affect your digestion.

If you're going to be running for longer than 90 minutes, for example a marathon or half-marathon, you will perform better if you follow a programme of carbohydrate-loading in the three days before the race. This involves reducing your training and increasing the amount of starchy foods you eat while cutting down on protein. Sports dietitians recommend that in the three days leading up to the race more than the normal 60 percent of your food intake should be carbohydrates. This is important for maximising your muscles' energy stores.



The morning of your run

On the day of the race, have a meal that is high in carbohydrate and low in protein, fibre and fat, for example porridge with a banana or toast with honey. This will top up the level of energy in your muscles – particularly important if your race is first thing in the morning after eating nothing overnight.

Eat this meal between one and four hours before the start of the race so your stomach has time to empty.

After the race

Have something to drink and eat as soon as you can after crossing the finish line. Eating something salty will help you to rehydrate more quickly.



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ILLNESS

During training

If you're injured, or have flu or gastroenteritis, don't train until you are fully recovered. Although the worst flu symptoms are usually over after five days, it can take much longer to recover completely.

When you're better, start training gently and build up gradually. Don't try to make up for lost mileage – this may cause more damage or illness. Consider carefully whether or not you can run the race if you have been ill or injured.

Fit to race?

Don't run a race if you feel unwell or have been ill recently. Running may put you at risk of serious illness if you have a fever, have been vomiting, have had severe diarrhoea or any chest pains, or otherwise feel unwell. Don't try to run just because you have collected sponsors to raise money for a charity – you will be able to run other races in future.

Deferring your entry

If you decide not to take part in the run, you will be able to defer your place and have guaranteed entry for the race next year. For more information, please see www.greatrun.org/Helpdesk

AFTER THE RACE

Don't let yourself get cold by standing around after you have finished. Make sure you keep moving, especially if you feel dizzy, and have something to drink. Collect your bag as soon as you can and change into warm, dry clothing – foil blankets won't stop you from getting cold. Then go to wherever you have arranged to meet your friends and family.

Follow the advice in this leaflet about eating and drinking after the race. If you haven't drunk enough or eaten anything, you can feel faint even over half an hour after finishing a race. If this happens, have something to eat and drink, but don't drink too much.

RACE NUMBERS

It is important to fill in all the requested information on the back of your race number – including contact numbers for the day of the event. You must run with your own race number and not let anyone else use it if you decide not to take part.

Agreeing to the conditions of entry means only you are registered to this number. This will help medical staff identify you in case of an emergency – imagine the stress that could be caused to friends and family if someone is mistakenly identified.

RESPECT THE CHALLENGE

TOP TIPS

- 1 Check the weather forecast to help you decide what clothes you will need.
 - If it's going to be cold or wet, you might want to bring a hat and gloves to keep you warm before you start.
 - For hot weather, consider bringing a baseball cap to shade your face (or neck) and wear breathable clothing.
- 2 It's a good idea to practice running carrying a bottle with a sports cap. Powerade will be available at the event, so why not try it out before the race to see if it suits you.
- 3 You might want to bring some old clothes that you can start the race in and throw away once you have warmed up.
- 4 Don't wear new trainers for the first time on race day – it's a good idea to run in them for at least a month before the event. It's essential that these have been properly fitted to your feet and running style. Trainers help to cushion the impact of running on your feet and lower limbs, which goes some way to protecting them.
- 5 Make sure you have something to eat and drink to keep you going on the journey home after the race.
- 6 Wear water-resistant sun cream – just be careful not to put on too much otherwise when you sweat, the sun cream may run into your eyes. Apply Vaseline to any areas where you have had chafing during training, such as under your arms, bra band, toes or groin.
- 7 The first few miles can be very crowded. Many people tire themselves out by dodging in and out of runners because they are behind on race plans. Try to maintain a slow, even pace and enjoy the event. As you warm up, you can increase your pace if it feels comfortable. Use the distance markers as a reminder to review how you are feeling, your posture, breathing and pace.