

The Day Before A Marathon Can Make Or Break Your Race

The hardest part of your half or full marathon training is over, but what you do during the day before your race can make or break your race. Follow these tips to make sure you avoid making mistakes that will cost you valuable time or cause discomfort during your half or full marathon.

1. Eat Plenty of Carbohydrates

As you've been doing before your long training runs, you should be eating about 65-70% of your calories from carbs in the days leading up to your race. Don't stuff yourself at dinner the night before. Carbo-loading does not mean that you should eat three plates of pasta for dinner. As many runners like to say, "Too much 'loading' can lead to 'unloading' during the race." Eat amounts of food that you would normally eat.

2. Avoid Any Unusual Foods

Stick with foods that have worked well for you before your long training runs. If you're planning to eat dinner out, check the restaurant's menu to make sure they serve foods that you've eaten before your long runs.

3. Stay Hydrated

Drink plenty of water throughout the day. If you're hydrating properly, your urine should be light yellow. You can also have one sports drink, to make sure you're getting some extra electrolytes. Avoid alcoholic beverages because they have a dehydrating effect, and they'll interfere with your sleep.

4. Don't Overdo It

Stay off your feet, rest and relax. When you go to the race expo to pick up your race packet, don't spend hours walking around, attending clinics, and eating free food samples. Spending too much time on your feet will tire you out, and hanging around big crowds at the expo may get you nervous about your race. It's never a good idea to try new foods in the days before a half or full marathon -- and that includes giveaways. When you do need to walk around (when you go to the expo, for instance), make sure you're wearing running shoes or other very comfortable shoes.

5. Go For a Short Run, If You Need It

You're not going to lose any fitness by resting the day before your half or full marathon. But if you typically get pre-race anxiety, or you feel like you need to stay loose, it might be beneficial for you to do a very slow, 20-minute run the day before. If you do run, keep your thoughts positive and keep telling yourself that you're ready for your race. If you think you perform better after rest, then just relax during those 24 hours leading up to the race. Whatever you do, make sure that you don't do a significant workout that's going to leave you feeling tired or sore the next day.

6. Make Sure Your Toenails are Trimmed

Check your toenails and clip any that are too long. Keeping your toenails neat and short will prevent them from hitting the front of your shoes, which can lead to bloody or black toenails.



7. Get Your Clothing and Gear Ready

Lay out all your clothing and gear for the race the night before. Essential items include:

- Race bib (number) and safety pins
- Race timing chip (if it's not part of your race bib)
- Running outfit, hat, shoes and socks
- Wristwatch
- Your race fuels, such as energy gels (whatever you've been training with)
- A product to prevent chafing, such as petroleum jelly or Body Glide
- Sunscreen

8. Stay Relaxed

Use visualization techniques while you're relaxing during the day. Envision yourself on the course. Think positively about all the work you've put into your training.

9. Plan Breakfast

Make sure you have everything you need for breakfast. Don't assume that you'll be able to get certain foods at the race start -- it's better to be prepared and know you already have your food with you. Again, you should be eating breakfast foods that you tried out before your long training runs.

10. Review the course map.

You probably received a copy of the course map in your race packet. (If not, you could always look on the race website.) Even if you've already looked at the map (including the elevation map), review it one more time so you'll know what to expect. It's always good to know where you'll hit some hills and how frequent the water stops are.

11. Get Inspired

Watch a movie (maybe a film about running) or read a book that you find inspiring. Get some inspiration from these motivational running quotes or quotes about running marathons.

12. Plan your trip to the start.

Make sure you know exactly how you're getting to the start and that you're anticipating any problems, like road closures. If you're driving to the start, make sure you have the right directions and know where you can park near the start. Give yourself plenty of time so you're not nervous that you'll miss the start if something unexpected happens. If you're taking mass transit, do your research to see if there's any potential for delays.

13. Don't Stress About Lack of Sleep.

Don't worry if you can't sleep the night before your half or full marathon; most people do not sleep well the night before. One sleepless night is very unlikely to hurt your performance. Two nights before your race is the most important night of rest. The excitement and adrenaline rush from race day will give you enough energy for your race.

14. Plan to Get Up Early

Set your alarm clock and double check it. Give yourself plenty of time to get ready, eat breakfast, and get to the race start early. If you're staying in a hotel, request a wake-up call, just to be safe.

Marathon Recovery -The plan of action

Immediately post race

After you cross the finish line, try to get something warm and get to your clothes. You'll probably get cold very quickly, and while it won't help you recover, getting warm will sure make you feel a lot better.

Try to find something to eat. Bananas, energy bars, sports drinks, fruit, and bagels are all good options. Many marathoners can't eat soon after finishing, so grab a handful of items and make your way to friends and family.

When you get back to the hotel room, you should consider an ice bath. Fill the tub with ice and cold water and submerge your lower body for 15 minutes. You don't need the water too cold, 55 degrees is optimal, but anything colder than 65 degrees will do. After your ice bath, you can take a nap or walk around to try and loosen the legs. At this point, you've done about all you can do for the day. Relax and relish in your accomplishment.

If you are looking for a way to get a one-on-one running analysis, sign up for our FREE stride clinic. Our next clinic will be held on Tuesday, June 2nd. Call 872-5800 to schedule your 30 minute session.