

How to avoid injury while training for a Marathon

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So it's the London Marathon in 2.5 months, and whether it's your first marathon, you're returning from injury or you just haven't run much over the winter getting the time you want on race day can be as much about training smart as training hard. So how do you train "smart"?

Firstly be aware that overtraining injuries (particularly things like shin splints, Achilles tendonitis and knee cap related pains) are quite common amongst athletes who suddenly up the amount of training they are doing. The body is very good at adapting to small increases in extra stress and strain given time to do so. What the body is not so good at is dealing with big increases in loading in a short space of time. What does this mean for your running? Plan your training timetable months in advance and stick to it – don't boom-bust! There are lots of good examples of graded intensity running programs available via running magazines or on the internet. It's important to note that they are very generalised though and you may require something more specific. For example if you are built like Mo Farah the chances are you'll be able to put a lot more miles in on the road than if you're built like an international prop forward.

So let's say you are the next Duncan Jones – what is more likely to work for you as a training program? One thing might be to make more use of a cross

training type approach and build up your aerobic fitness on a bike/step machine/cross-trainer or in the swimming pool?

The risk of repetitive strain injury is less if you keep changing the activity that you do to get fit. To make that cross training program even more specific you could try power walking on an incline treadmill.

This not only is cardio-vascularly intensive it builds good strength and endurance in your calves and hamstrings (which are important for having a good kick) despite being low impact.

Don't neglect your rest days. The body takes time to recover after a hard training session and replenish the cells energy stores. One way of working around this is to adopt a polarity training type approach, where the majority of the training sessions are relatively low intensity (i.e. where you could still talk in full sentences and feel refreshed rather than exhausted afterwards – essentially just working your aerobic fitness) with maybe one or two session per week of very high intensity e.g. running fast at race pace and pushing your anaerobic fitness/lactic acid tolerance. This avoids training for prolonged periods of time when the body is tired which is when injuries are more likely to occur.

Don't neglect your fuel. As any body builder will tell you what you eat in the kitchen is as important as the work you do in the gym. This applies to fitness training also. You will need to carb load

before your race and before any high intensity training sessions. You will likely find you are eating more as your training regime increases. This food will ideally have a reasonably high percentage of complex carbohydrates. The week before a marathon is not a good time to diet!

If you do have a problem get it treated early. Over training injuries are much harder to treat if you let them drag on and just manage them with pain killers. If there is a biomechanical issue with how you run you want to fix it as soon as possible. If there is an issue with your training regime and your body's ability to cope with the increasing load you want to address it sooner rather than later. Things like gait analysis by a professional with tools as simple as a running machine and a phone can help a great deal.

If you would like to book an appointment with one of our specialist physiotherapists or for more information on our services available please contact **029 2073 1112** where we will ensure you are booked an appointment at your earliest convenience.

You can find more information on the wide range of services we offer at Perform Cardiff, Spire Cardiff Hospital via our website www.spirehealthcare.com/spire-cardiff-hospital/treatments/perform-physiotherapy/