

GET ACTIVE. STAY ACTIVE

I'm a novice runner and am planning on attempting a marathon. How should I prepare?

*-Steven
Clinton Township*

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Preparing for a marathon requires a great deal of time, discipline, and commitment. If done incorrectly, it may even lead to injury.

Whether your goal is simply to cross the finish line or to post a competitive time, you should follow a training schedule. There are many good ones available on the Internet or you can find them in running magazines.

Once you've chosen a schedule, you need to be sure your body and mind are up for the challenge. Allow yourself 4-5 months for training. If it's been a while since your last physical examination, you should see a doctor before you begin. A positive mental attitude will also do wonders for your performance.

In addition to preparing your body, you also need to protect it. Wearing high quality shoes is imperative. Running in shoes that are worn down can lead to injury. Be sure to choose all of your gear at a specialty store where the salespeople are very knowledgeable.

Besides having good running shoes, the type of running surface, warming up, and cooling down are also important factors to consider in avoiding physical injury. Some runners prefer to run on flat grass because it offers better shock absorption. I feel it is best to train on the same type of surface on which the race will be run. This will most likely be asphalt.

Whichever surface you choose to run on, the warm up or cool down period should not be omitted. Warming up prepares your body for the greater demands of your workout. It can last anywhere from 5-60 minutes depending on the distance of your run. It may include light jogging, short sprinting, and static stretching. After you finish your workout or race, the cool down should begin. This will help your body recover. It can include about 10 minutes of easy running or jogging. Stretching will prepare your muscles for the next workout. Each stretch should be held 15 to 30 seconds, 2 to 3 times per area.

Although running a marathon may seem physically and mentally overwhelming, if you prepare correctly, it can be one of the greatest accomplishments of your life.

Please submit any questions you may have for our sports medicine experts by e-mailing cangelel@dmc.org. In the subject line, please write, "Get Active, Stay Active." We will respond to all the questions we receive and select one each month to feature in our column.

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