

Your Whole Health: Take 5

Ramping Up Your Running

When warmer weather hits, there are plenty of opportunities to participate in races long and short. Whether you're a novice runner hoping to complete your first 5K or finally taking the plunge and training for a half or full marathon, the following tips from Logan University Instructor **Brett Winchester, DC** will help keep you in top training shape.

If you're training for your first 5K: If you're a new runner, achieving this distance is commendable but isn't likely to cause any injuries. In fact, a majority of participants in 5K runs will not complete any official training before the race—although they won't finish at a competitive pace, these runners are able to safely go the distance, hang out with friends and family and still have the rest of their day to do other things.

If you're ready to increase your mileage: Many runners make the logical transition from 5Ks to a half marathon and then a full marathon. Regardless of the distance you ultimately work up to, going beyond the 5K mark requires more preparation and training. It's smart to increase your mileage gradually. The rule of thumb is no more than a 20 percent increase each week. Go beyond that, and you'll be at increased risk of injury such as tendonitis, runner's knee, IT band syndrome or stress fractures. Including some cross-training—think biking, weight lifting or yoga—into your plan can also protect you from injury.

Before signing up for 26.2 miles: Because marathon race day is a completely different animal than what you'll experience during training sessions, it's wise to run a few intermediate races such as a 10K or half marathon before taking on a full marathon. By doing this, you'll get to experience all the pressures of race day on a smaller level. It's worth noting that many runners never advance beyond a half marathon, and that's okay!

Going the distance: In general, the more miles you log each week, the higher your chances of injury. Keep yourself injury-free by committing to a smart training plan from the get-go. A local running store can be a great resource in selecting your training program and can help you choose running shoes and other necessary equipment. Many running stores also have training groups you can join for free—a great way to stay motivated through the many weeks of training.

Smart fuel: Food is fuel, and while most lower-distance runners don't need to change their diet to cross the finish line in good shape, those with a heavy weekly running load or who are preparing for a full marathon will need to make sure they're meeting their energy needs. I recommend a Paleo diet with the addition of healthy carbohydrates before training sessions and race day. You'll also want to increase your water intake—by as much as double for those preparing for a marathon. Your “normal” amount is half your body weight in ounces—so if you weigh 150 pounds, you should take in 75 ounces each day, and 150 if you're training for a marathon.

Recovery is crucial: Many new marathoners make the mistake of overtraining. Remember, the rest and recovery days included in your plan are just as important as the training days! Once you cross the finish line, wait awhile before committing to your next full marathon. Taking time off to let your body recover is important for long-term participation in the sport. Limit yourself to two or three marathons a year. After each one, take a month off and switch to another form of exercise.