

**Marathon Advice - Afterwards - The Recovery Phase**  
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**Recovery after the Marathon**

**Recovery begins IMMEDIATELY after you cross the line**

**Important!! First Thing!!**

- Think on your feet! You will be VERY tired. Heed the advice in this section
- Keep moving once you cross the line. The lactic acid debt will hit you pretty quick and all movement will help clear it.
- The recovery phase after the marathon starts immediately after the race. Re-hydrate and refuel.
- After you finish (and you will!), make sure to eat something. Try to get some carbohydrates into you within 15 minutes of finishing - it'll kick start your body's recovery. Leave it later and your digestive system will start to shut down - safeguard mode. Replace lost fluids and energy as soon as possible. Drink plenty and try to eat foods with plenty of carbohydrates; bananas, pasta, bread, etc
- Keep warm, remember to pack a fleece or jumper, t-shirt, leggings, hat, socks and, maybe, gloves. If the day is wet, a change of shoes will be needed. If all this doesn't fit into the 'drop bag', give the non-essentials to someone who will meet you afterwards. You'll feel cold very quickly afterwards, so wrap up well, ideally in layers.
- Have someone meet you at a prearranged spot to give you dry clothes or to take extra layers. The finish area is mayhem! Know exactly where you are meeting friends and family! Have a backup location in case, for whatever reason, the first location is, say, closed to either runners or spectators.

**Later in the Day**

- It is unwise to pop your blisters until after you shower, to prevent infection. Use a sterilized needle to pop two slits on opposite sides of the blister and leave the roof on. Lubricate the area with antibiotic ointment, and only cover them if you absolutely needed. (Second Skin or Compeed work best.) Leaving the blisters open and soaking in Epsom Salts also dries them out faster. If you have black and blue toenails, drain them as soon as possible, and you may be able to save your toenails and avoid a lot of unnecessary pain.
- Alternate hot and cold soaks, and get a massage. Use a foam roller (lightly) and a "stick" or pastry roller.
- Congrats on finishing! Rule of thumb for recovery is 1 day for every mile, that doesn't mean don't do anything but don't plan to race or run hard any time soon. Take it easy!
- Keep moving around as much as possible in the days after the marathon. Alternate hot and cold soaks, and get a massage. Anti-inflammatory such as Aleve or Advil (as long as you are not allergic or have ulcers) will help ease your pain in the first post-marathon week. Getting a massage helps flush out all the waste products in your muscles.
- It may be wise not to resume running until all of the soreness is gone from your legs. Use your judgment about when to resume running. Basically, if anything is swollen or bruised, or if you experience sharp pains when you resume running, stop!
- Eat a bit more and sleep a bit more. You need the building blocks for muscle repair, and your body does most of its repair work when you're sleeping

## **The Day After the Marathon**

- Rather than spin the day after the race, swim or deep water run. You loosen your muscles up a bit without putting any pressure on the joints.
- If, like me, you are prone to cold-sores, you will be very prone to them after the marathon. If you swim in the few days afterward, you should apply a lip protector or Vaseline. It helps to lightly smear Vaseline into and around openings of your nostrils. Bet the rest of you are glad you don't get cold-sores - lucky buggers!!
- The post-endurance-event athlete is prone to fatigue and chronic dehydration, as well as injury and illness. "The body is weak, and the mind is undisciplined because the immediate goal has been achieved. A post-marathon runner is very vulnerable". Three body systems are now in need of recovery: muscular, chemical and psychological.
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## **Resuming Training**

- Unless you're going for second Marathon within, say, 6 weeks, your first long run should slot in about 4 weeks after the marathon.
- Start getting back into training with longer runs and speedwork about 3-4 weeks afterwards. Don't be surprised if you come down with a cold or some other virus in the next week or so. It often happens after a marathon. Pamper yourself until it clears.
- Savor the soreness afterward. Each creaky step will be a reminder of all your hard work. Once you're ready to feel like a normal person again, cycling/spinning is a great recovery activity. Also, a massage will never feel so good or so well-deserved.
- If your symptoms don't improve in a week, seek medical advice. I recommend taking it easy for a month after the marathon.
- There's no rush. You have a lot of repair work to do. Let the pain settle. Have a walk and splash about in the swimming pool. One week after the marathon is quite soon enough for your first run of any length, and if you don't run for two weeks that's fine.
- Novice and veteran endurance event racers, from road runners to rowers to multisporters, have one thing in common: all are subject to "the blues" in the weeks following the big day. It's important to be prepared for this possibility and to take measures, if necessary, to get back on track.
- It may be, for reasons of weather or bad form or bad luck on the day, the event did not go as well as you had hoped, and you are now spending a lot of mental energy cursing circumstances or trying to figure out what happened. Rest up, recover & lick your wounds. There will be another day!