

Wellbeing



HARD YARDS Runners cross Tower Bridge in the 2016 London Marathon. If you are taking part this year, how you prepare for the event will make a big difference on the day itself

MOVE MORE

Prepare to succeed in the toughest test of all

Some 40,000 people are expected to take part in the 39th London Marathon on 28 April. Weekend's fitness expert Professor Greg Whyte answers some burning questions



WHEN SHOULD I START TRAINING?

'As early as possible. A marathon is a massive physical challenge and it's important to set your expectations at that. Because we watch tens of thousands tackle the 26.2 miles, it's easy to presume that a marathon is easily do-able. To do it successfully – which to me is crossing the finish line and enjoying the event – you need to progressively train over time.'

HOW MANY MILES SHOULD I DO AS MY LONGEST RUN?

'A general rule of thumb is to hit 80% of your final race distance, so a great marker for marathon training is 20 miles – if you

can do 22, even better – and as miserable as those last six miles are on race day, the crowd, adrenaline and sheer determination will get you through.'

HOW MUCH SHOULD I DRINK DURING THE RACE?

'My rule of thumb is drink early, little and often! Never pass a water station without taking something – but it should be a small amount so that you don't need the loo or feel heavy from too much fluid.'

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET CRAMP IN MY MUSCLES?

'We don't really know what causes cramp, but one of the main drivers when it comes to avoiding it is strength training. If your muscles aren't strong enough, they will

cramp. Not doing enough training is also a cause, as is low fluid intake and being low on electrolytes, particularly magnesium. So think how you can stop yourself getting it in the first place. Strengthen your calves, hamstrings and lower back, start the race fully hydrated and make sure your pre-race breakfast is appropriate. If you get cramp, don't keep running thinking it's going to get better. It won't! Stop, stretch and try to prevent it from getting any worse.'

SHALL I SAVE MY NEW TRAINERS FOR THE BIG DAY?

'Absolutely not! Wearing new trainers on the day can lead to disaster. Trainers have a lifespan, so as well as not wearing worn-out trainers with no support or bounce you don't want to wear brand-new trainers either. Buy new trainers around now (February-March) and rotate them once or twice a week with your old ones, so when marathon day comes they should still be in good condition, but not box-fresh with no give.'

HOW DO I STOP MYSELF 'HITTING THE WALL'?

'If you've done the right training and eaten and drunk enough in the lead up

to the marathon, you are less likely to "hit the wall" – when your body and mind hits a sudden wave of fatigue. The other thing that can lead to this happening is your pace and judgement on the day. Run *your* race and don't get carried away in that first mile. If you do hit the wall, consume a high glycaemic index gel or some jelly babies for a quick sugar fix and burst of energy.'

HOW DO I MAKE SURE EVERYTHING GOES SMOOTHLY ON THE DAY?

'Training for a marathon isn't just physiological – it's also psychological, tactical and technical. In training, particularly on long runs, make sure you wear the right shorts, underwear and running vests, while trialling the fluid and snacks you want to use and the amount you need to take on. My top advice when it comes to kit is do not wait for the big day to wear your vest – especially a charity one. Wash it a few times before you wear it and do some training runs in it, noting where it rubs and feels uncomfortable. Never do anything new on race day: wear the same socks, headphones, running belt and other kit you wore in training. Follow a strategy that works so there are no surprises on the day.'



@gppwhyte

EAT BETTER

Marathon nutrition

Sports nutritionist Anita Bean offers competitors her expert advice



Q Do I need to carb load?

A 'It's a good idea to start the race with full carbohydrate (glycogen) stores. Carb loading can increase endurance and may help avoid "hitting the wall". It's achieved by tapering your training for the final two to three weeks, then focusing on high-carb foods for a couple of days before the race – porridge, potatoes, rice, bananas or pasta. Eat little and often; avoid eating too late or overstuffing yourself!'

Q What should I eat for breakfast on race day?

A 'Stick to what you're used to and plan breakfast three to four hours before the start. Include carbohydrate and protein for long-lasting energy: porridge and bananas, granola and yogurt, or eggs on toast.'

Q How should I hydrate before the race?

A 'Drink 350-500ml of water three to four hours before the start. Then sip small amounts to quench thirst. Don't overdrink, or you'll face an early pitstop!'

Q Should I take any caffeine beforehand?

A 'Caffeine reduces your perception of effort and enhances endurance. It

takes about 45 minutes to peak in your body and its effects last several hours, so take it at the start or mid-race. Stick to your normal dose and only use it if you've trained with it.'

Q What should I eat during the race itself?

A 'Start fuelling after about 60 minutes, then have 15-30g of carbohydrate every 30 minutes or so (depending on your speed and tolerance). Get 15g of carbs from three jelly babies, a small banana or small fruit and nut bar. Take your own supplies if necessary.'

Q Do I need gels?

A 'Gels are a convenient fuelling option for long runs, but they're not essential. Experiment with different flavours and find a fuelling strategy that suits your body.'

Q How can I avoid gut problems during long runs?

A 'Start with small amounts (one bite of banana, for example), then gradually increase the amount and frequency to improve food digestion and absorption as you run.'

Anita Bean is nutritionist to the London Marathon and the author of more than 20 books. She will offer advice to runners at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show from 24-27 April

'I can't wait for the challenge'

Weekend fitness editor Lucy Miller on why she's entered the London Marathon

'The last time I ran a marathon I was child free, in a happy relationship and belonged to a running club.'

'I did my last London Marathon in 2011, in three hours 23 minutes, and as a result got 'Good For Age' automatic entry for the next two years. I didn't do it again as I wanted to start a family, and I now have two children, aged five and two.'

'Eight years later, I've got back into running and secured a place in the London Marathon through Cancer Research. I am thrilled to be running for an amazing cause and also because running has got me through one of the toughest years of my life

after my 19-year relationship ended. It has been my escape route – some people would drown their sorrows, but I enjoy nothing more than lacing up my trainers and getting some air.'

'I run with friends, on my own and in the woods – sometimes I walk. Listening to an uplifting audiobook or podcast while running has done wonders for my outlook at a despondent time of my life – it's been the perfect distraction and helped me to focus and pull myself together on the toughest days.'

'Roll on 28 April – I can't wait for the challenge and to high-five my kids Lacie and Elliott as I run past!'

ON YOUR MARKS...

If you're not ready for a marathon, these shorter races could be worth a shot

5K

Battersea Park 5K

When? 20 April

How much? From £24

This fun run is flat and on grass, offering you a chance for a personal best. It involves one lap around the park and entry covers the event, training guidance, a medal and refreshments. runthrough.co.uk

10K

City Of Lincoln 10K

When? 7 April

How much? £26

An excellent course for more serious runners – the route is flat, fun and scenic, passing Lincoln cathedral and the Roman walls. runforall.com

HALF MARATHON Hampton Court Palace Half Marathon

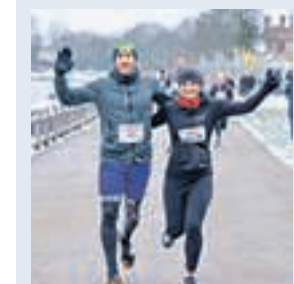
When? 17 March

How much? £65

(charity entry only)

A perfect warm-up for the London, Manchester or Brighton Marathons. The course is flat, scenic and mainly traffic free, starting in the palace courtyard and following the Thames before ending in the castle gardens (below). The medal, featuring Henry VIII, will impress! palacehalf.com

If these are oversubscribed by the time Weekend goes to print, there are plenty of races all over the UK. Head to findarace.com for more information.



Photography: Alamy, Getty

365 STEPS TO BETTER HEALTH No 124

Sprinkle a pinch of poppy seeds on your morning yogurt. They are a source of thiamine, which helps to keep your nervous system healthy.



Find all 365 steps in the latest issue of *Waitrose & Partners Health Magazine* or online at waitrose.com/healthsteps



24 HOURS ON MY PLATE SAMANTHA WOMACK

The actress and singer loves to dunk crusty bread into baked Camembert

'I woke at 9.30am after a late night at the theatre and had a cup of peppermint tea. After making sure my daughter Lily, who is with me, was hooked up to her online classroom, I trundled off to the theatre where I ate a protein pot of boiled eggs and spinach with a dash of soy sauce. I don't like going on stage with a full stomach, so I tend not to eat much when I'm working.'

'After the matinée I had an espresso and a chocolate and nut bar to perk me up. By 6pm I was ravenous, so I popped out for a salad – crayfish with avocado and pumpkin seeds. I also drank half a litre of water between shows.'

'Coming off stage at around 9.30pm, it was into the pub with other cast members for a couple of large gin and tonics with a dash of Angostura bitters, before heading off to where I'm staying. I had a hot chai tea, some oat biscuits and an hour of Netflix before bed.'

'I love Japanese food as well as fish, eggs and vegetables, and luckily I haven't got a sweet tooth. Cheese is my downfall though – I can't resist dunking crusty bread into Camembert, baked with chilli and onion marmalade. And I do love picky, savoury things. I believe in eating what I want in small amounts and I don't like saying no to foods.'

'If you rule something out, you just eat more, whereas if you allow yourself a bit, then you tend not to gorge.'

Samantha Womack stars as Rachel in the UK and Ireland stage tour of *The Girl On The Train*. Visit girlonthetrainplay.com

THE VERDICT

Emma Williams, Partner & Nutritionist, says

'Eggs are a complete protein and high in vitamin D for healthy bones. Combine them with a starchy carb such as wholemeal toast to provide more energy for the day. When working, try to think of food as fuel. Prepare food to take with you and eat little and often throughout



the day so you're not ravenous between shows. You needed more fruit and veg to reach your 5 a day, more starchy carbs and fibre. Keep a check on those G&Ts in the evening too! **2.5/5**