

LINLITHGOW AC - ADVICE NOTE - RACE PREPARATION AND RECOVERY

Introduction

Racing puts the body and mind under great stress. When we race, we push the boundaries and want to 'leave it all out there', so we need to be mindful of how best to prepare our body for the race, and how to recover from it. Reducing activity before a race helps the body rest and ensures sufficient stores of energy to do the race justice. It also allows you to prepare mentally.

Recovery after the race promotes healing – physical and mental. There are many things we can't see but which are going on in our bodies after a hard race – from elevated resting pulse rate, to micro-tears in our muscles, to elevated cortisone levels in the blood. These need time to return to normal. And there are further fitness gains in the period of rest after racing - so after a hard race, taking time off is good for you and enhances your health and fitness!

Before the race

Before you race, take time off to rest - while keeping mobile and fuelling your body for what's to come. Rest time will depend on distance you plan to race, but as a general rule of thumb don't do anything other than a slow jog to shake out the muscles and keep mobile the day before a race. If you're running a marathon or further at the weekend, this pushes the body beyond the normal limits, so don't do a fast-paced track session in the week before. Try a short run at your marathon pace instead. If you're running a mile to half marathon at the weekend, you can probably get away with a hard and fast-paced track session on the Tuesday or Wednesday. But everyone is different. Get to know your body. There are some good ideas here on the week before a marathon - [What to Do the Week Before a Marathon - Run For Good \(run-for-good.com\)](http://run-for-good.com)

Recovering from your race

Even if you don't feel sore, there will have been unseen damage to your body. Take time to reflect on how it went. Congratulate yourself on taking time to recover so you can do even better next time. Generally, you should take a week off from anything other than keeping mobile after a marathon or longer. Shorter races will have shorter recovery periods. Think about doing different things to keep active – walking, swimming, gardening, cycling – but not at high intensity or for prolonged periods.

Consider your nutrition – the longer the race and the hotter the conditions, the more fluid you are likely to have lost. This needs to be replaced – water is great, but also take in drinks with nutritional value such as milk or fruit juice. You should not need to spend money on expensive recovery drinks, but it's a personal choice. Try to get balance in what you eat – nothing off limits but a good mix of protein, carbohydrates and fats with minimal processed foods.

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