

TOP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MARATHON TRAINING, ANSWERED BY A CARDIAC ELECTRO PHYSIOLOGIST



The Mumbai Marathon is an event held on the third Sunday in the month of January every year and this year it will be on January 21. It is Asia's largest marathon with six race categories. People from across the world including sports personalities, athletes, businessmen and Bollywood celebrities participate in the event. The race has USD 405,000 prize pool, making it the country's richest race. Running a marathon is not easy. You need to prepare yourself physically and mentally to face the distance even if you are a competitive runner. We asked Dr Santosh Kumar Dora, Cardiac Electro Physiologist, Asian Heart Institute, Mumbai, some questions about marathon training and here are the answers. (ALSO READ [Want to run a marathon? Here are 4 running clubs you can join in Delhi](#)).

When should one start training for a marathon?

Ideally, marathon training starts 16 weeks before the race day. Usually, there are 4 to 5 training days per week. There are numerous training plans available. Choose a plan which best suits your lifestyle. The best is to join a runner group and train under a coach.

Training involves warm-up sessions, running, cool down phase, cross training, core muscle exercises etc. One or two days in a week should be reserved as rest days. This is to allow the muscles to have recovery time. Do not run aggressively in last 2 weeks before the race day to avoid any injury which can jeopardize your participation in the marathon.

How to start running if you are not a runner?

Persons who have not run before or have not done other forms of vigorous exercise before should have a general health check-up first. It should include evaluation of heart and lung. Some tests like an electrocardiogram, treadmill test, 2D echocardiogram and pulmonary function test give a good evaluation of cardiopulmonary fitness for running. Once found fit, one can join a runners group. The coach helps you in the whole training process. Training involves warm-up sessions, running, cool down phase, cross training, core muscle exercises etc. One or two days in a week should be reserved as rest days.

If you have never run before, then first start walking. Next step is brisk walking (5 to 6 km/hr), then jogging (6 to 9 km/hr) and then running (more than 9 km/hr). Start running initially with 15 minutes to half an hour running, then gradually increase the duration.

What is the best remedy for a side stitch during running?

A side stitch is a localized pain in the diaphragmatic muscle often occurring during strenuous exercise, especially running and swimming. When it occurs during running, you need to slow down.

Raise the arm that is on the same side as that of the side stitch and touch the back of your head. It stretches the muscle and gives relaxation. Alternatively push your first two fingers inwards and upwards at the point where it hurts for 10 seconds. You may do the following exercise regularly before running to prevent side stitch. Reach your right hand high in the air and then bend your torso to the left side and hold for 30 seconds. Repeat this on the opposite side.

WHAT EXERCISES SHOULD ONE INCLUDE IN THE TRAINING APART FROM RUNNING?



Marathon

Running a marathon requires a lot of endurance. Core muscle strengthening is essential for the body to sustain running for such a long distance for a long time. There are various kinds of exercise for core muscle training. Your coach will train you in that. Two times in a week, core muscle training for at least 30 minutes is essential for marathon runners. Apart from that cross training like swimming, cycling also is needed to strengthen other muscle groups that are underutilized during running.

What are the precautions one should take while training and during a marathon?

Do a thorough body-check up before undergoing marathon training. Follow your coach who trains you step by step and slowly and steadily makes you fit for running marathon. Do not over exercise. That leads to muscle injury and you may need a long resting period. Eat healthily and sleep well. A proper running shoe is essential for a proper foot support. Avoid changing shoe just before the marathon. (ALSO READ [Tummy cramps while running: 5 tips to prevent stomach cramps and side stitches](#)).

What should you drink/eat before a marathon?

Carbohydrate should provide 70% of daily calorie requirement during training for a marathon as it provides ready and instant energy which is required for running. Proteins also are important for muscle building and recovery. The diet for dinner should be light so that you feel good to run in the morning.

Take care of the hydration. It should not be too less or too much. Normal hydration rule during run is to take 100 to 150 ml of fluid every 30 mins.

After the marathon, is it important to continue with the training?

I hardly believe people discontinuing training after a marathon. Running a marathon is such an addiction. Once you get into that, you keep loving it. People discontinue if they become physically disabled otherwise.

Maintaining the training helps you keep fit and healthy overall and helps you prepare for the next marathon.