



Marathon Recovery Advice

A lot of time is spent getting ready for a marathon...whether it is your first or you have run multiple. You've done all your training and now you have finally run the race. You think it's over, but you're not done yet. Now you have to start to think about your recovery from the marathon. If you want to feel your best in the days ahead (after the marathon) and get back on the road as soon as possible, there are a number of things you can do to help yourself feel better.

Race Day – Right After The Marathon

What you do immediately in the minutes and hours after the marathon is very important.

- 1. Don't Stop Moving.** At the end of the race, make sure you keep moving. If you stop moving you might get dizzy or light-headed. Why? Your blood pressure can drop very rapidly when you suddenly stop moving and you might even feel faint. How can you help to prevent this? Once you've crossed the finish line, slow down to a very easy jog and then begin walking for 5-10 minutes. This gradual transition is allowing your body to gently stop moving.
- 2. Put Your Feet Up.** Once you have finished your gradual slow down, now is a good time to help reduce some of that lactic acid that has built up in your legs from hours of pounding. Lying down with your legs gently elevated can help reduce soreness from this build up.
- 3. Get a Massage...but not right now.** As good as it sounds, don't rush to the massage tent on race day. Wait until tomorrow. Don't get a massage until at least 24 to 72 hours after the marathon. A light massage might help you recover from the marathon but not immediately after the race when it will probably be more painful than helpful.
- 4. Ice is Nice.** Using ice on the muscles and joints of your legs can really help to reduce pain and inflammation and to give them a chance to begin the repair process. Using ice for 20 minutes every couple of hours after the race can go a long way in making you feel much better the next day.
- 5. Avoid Heat.** Probably the worst thing you can do after a marathon is sit in a hot bath. When you add heat to your traumatized muscles it causes additional swelling and inflammation, and so the pain gets worse. Wait at least a few days before sitting in a hot tub - and even then contrast therapy is recommended. What's that? Alternating heat and cold (apply heat, then ice, then heat, etc). This will better benefit your recovery.

6. Get Lots of Rest. Once the excitement of finishing the race wears off, you'll probably be tired, very tired. Go home. Sleep.

7. Eat Healthy Carbs. Because your muscles have just experienced massive glycogen depletion, you want to eat some healthy carbs for a couple of days after the marathon, and especially for several hours after the marathon. Any kind of fruit is ideal and bananas are great for rapidly replacing any potassium loss. Just keep in mind that healthy carbs are those that contain lots of nutrients which is why fruits are great. Candy and cookies aren't the best options, although after a marathon it's pretty likely you'll shovel anything into your body that's readily available. Just try and make most of the carbs healthy carbs.

8. Get Rehydrated Now. Start with water...and don't drink too much either. Fruit juices and energy drinks are also good because of the electrolyte replacements, and the vitamins and minerals. Keep the fluids flowing into your body - and beer doesn't count. Beer actually works against you because of its diuretic properties. Have a beer later, if you must, but only after you're completely rehydrated.

9. Don't Reach For That Advil Yet. Believe it or not, you want your muscles to do the work of repairing themselves, without help from anti-inflammatories or painkillers. Drugs will delay this process. Go natural - let nature do its thing and stay away from drugs.

10. Use First Aid. Make sure you take care of any blisters or bruises that might have happened as the result of the marathon. A little triple-antibiotic is a good place to start after getting them good and clean. Swollen joints and sore muscles should get ice, ice and more ice..

11. Stretch Gently With Caution. If you're feeling stiff, you might want to try some gentle stretching but do it with caution. You don't want to cause additional inflammation so do it slowly and gently. If anything hurts - stop. And don't feel like you need to stretch - there isn't any scientific research that says stretching will help with your recovery process. So don't feel like you need to stretch at all - you don't.

12. See An Expert. It's normal to be sore after a marathon, so expect a few days of delayed onset muscle soreness. If you notice swelling, excessive point tenderness or you are unable to put weight on a leg because of pain, go see an expert. At Blue Hills Sports & Spine we are used to working with people suffering from acute injuries and we can get you going on the road to recovery.