



EXPERT TRAINING TIPS FROM PROVIDENCE SPORTS MEDICINE

The Plan To Keep You On Pace: A Checklist For Your Personal Running and Walking Program

For runners and walkers alike, your efforts to prepare for races and relays need to cover many aspects of training. To keep you on track, consider a checklist of areas to address. Let's dive into some ideas on how to progress in the coming weeks and months before your big event.

Many of us have heard some version of the saying that "Rome wasn't built in a day." When it comes to preparing for your next race or relay, the same concept holds true. Looking closely at the demands of your running or walking event will help you identify key aspects of training that you will need to address as you ramp up your program in the coming weeks. For runners and walkers alike, making sure you have given each of these areas consideration will help optimize your preparations for the event.

Get things moving with a solid warm up

For all of your activities, devote 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning to a dynamic warm up. The key to a good warm up is to address all the muscles and joints involved in your activity, and to choose movements that involve these areas in coordinated efforts rather than relying too much on isolated work. A good dynamic warm up will gradually increase in intensity over the time you are getting ready and should promote circulation while getting your core temperature up. The warmup is also a good time to visualize your run or walk.

Use resistance training to your advantage

There has long been a stereotype that runners and walkers should avoid lifting weights, but in recent years it has become more clear to the masses that including resistance training as part of your endurance program is key. Resistance training helps build resiliency in your muscles, joints, and connective tissues, and it can help prevent them from breaking down as easily. Strengthening the movement patterns utilized during running and walking can not only help boost your force output with each stride, but when programmed correctly, can also help boost local muscular endurance (LME) critical to keeping your pace up over the long haul.

Get after those hills!

To no one's surprise, including hills as part of your training has many benefits. With many race and relay courses undoubtedly covering some hilly terrain, including bouts of hills in your running and walking training will get your heart pumping and legs ready for the challenge. Plan some of your training routes or trails to cover both up and down hill efforts. As some seasoned veterans of summer races can attest, making sure your body has trained for prolonged downhill efforts can be a big difference maker on your run.

Lay the foundation by building consistency

When you are beginning your training preparation for your race or relay, remember that the most important trait to start focusing on is actually your consistency. While your pace and mileage are also important, your body needs time to adjust to training up to 5 or 6 days a week. If you have not been training consistently at least 5 days a week, give yourself 3 to 4 weeks of running or walking at least 3 days a week with consistency before you dive all in. This period can act as a "pre-season" while you prepare your body to adapt to the greater demands of added mileage and faster paces.

Begin with the end in mind

After you have achieved a consistent training frequency, think about gradually increasing your mileage and pace over the course of 8, 10, or even 12 weeks. Giving your body ample time to adapt to the added training demands can make a huge difference when it comes to limiting your risk for certain types of injury. Think of the miles and pace you will be aiming to run during your event, and make sure you progress and challenge yourself in your training every other week to make steady progress towards those goals.

Don't forget the power of recovery

The added demands you are putting on your body not only require you to be fueled and hydrated to perform, but they also demand you optimize your recovery each day. Plan ahead to keep your body fueled with good food and liquids, give special attention to warming up, build in recovery as part of your weekly training schedule, and make sure you are devoting time to get sufficient sleep. While all of the aforementioned activities are important for recovery, making sure you sleep well each night helps your body repair and recuperate for tomorrow's training.

As you prepare for your running and walking events this summer, keep this checklist in mind. Set yourself up for long term success by maximizing the goal for each week. Remember, getting started and becoming consistent can be the hardest thing for some. Make the process manageable and you will be en-route to the finish line, on time!

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