

Running a Half Marathon — **START TO FINISH**



So, you want to run a half marathon. If you're already a long-distance runner, the idea probably feels pretty manageable. If you're a casual runner, it may feel like more of a stretch. Proper training — not just distance, but also nutrition and injury prevention — are key to your success. As with any new exercise program, check with your physician first.

Get started early, take a big picture approach and have fun. You can do this. Let's get started.

GETTING STARTED

Get the right stuff



Shoes are important!

A few tips about running shoes:

- Running shoes last about 6-8 months. If yours are older than that, it's time for new ones.
- Professionals at a local running store will help you find the right fit. Plan on a full size larger than your regular shoes to compensate for swelling.



Clothing matters, too.

- Stay away from cotton — it retains moisture. Invest in dry-fit clothing that wicks moisture and helps avoid chafing.
- Socks that wick moisture will help avoid blisters.

Have a training plan

When you start depends on your starting point. If you can run about 3 miles, plan on 14 weeks of training. If not, back it up to 16 weeks.



16 weeks

In the first couple of weeks, build your endurance, alternating running days with cross-training activities (cycling, swimming, aqua jogging, elliptical).

- Week 1 – Run/walk for 30 minutes every other day.
- Week 2 – Increase running/walking to 45 minutes every other day.

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14 weeks

Once you can comfortably and consistently run 3 miles, you're ready to kick into high gear. The following schedule is an excellent guide. A sports medicine specialist will help you tweak the plan, if needed.

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Cross Train	3 miles	3 miles
2	Off	3 miles	Off	3 miles	Cross Train	4 miles	3 miles
3	Off	3 miles	4 miles	3 miles	Cross Train	4 miles	3 miles
4	Off	3 miles	4 miles	3 miles	Cross Train	5 miles	3 miles
5	Off	4 miles	5 miles	4 miles	Cross Train	5 miles	3 miles
6	Off	4 miles	5 miles	4 miles	Cross Train	6 miles	3 miles
7	Off	4 miles	6 miles	4 miles	Cross Train	7 miles	4 miles
8	Off	4 miles	6 miles	4 miles	Cross Train	8 miles	4 miles
9	Off	5 miles	6 miles	5 miles	Cross Train	9 miles	3 miles
10	Off	5 miles	7 miles	5 miles	Cross Train	10 miles	3 miles
11	Off	5 miles	6 miles	5 miles	Cross Train	11 miles	3 miles
12	Off	5 miles	6 miles	4 miles	Cross Train	12 miles	3 miles
13	Off	5 miles	5 miles	3 miles	Off	6 miles	3 miles
14	Off	3 miles	5 miles	3 miles	Off	13.1 miles!	Off

FUELING FOR THE ROAD

Nutrition is key as you prepare your body for a half marathon. Your body needs extra energy and extra fuel. What you eat depends on when you are eating!



Pre-fuel

- 3-4 hours prior to your run – Eat a balanced meal of whole grains, vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats.
- 1 hour before – Simple carbs will “top off” your energy stores and prepare your body to meet its increased energy demands. Consider these:
 - Fruit (banana)
 - Energy bars (KIND, Honey Stinger waffles, CLIF BAR, Picky Bars)
 - Energy chews (Honey Stinger, CLIF BLOKS)



During

- Every 45-60 minutes, take in 30-60 g of simple carbs.
- Energy gels, chews and bars are portable and convenient.



Post

- Refuel your body within 30-60 minutes of your run, when muscles are more receptive to nutrition.
- Eat 60-80 g of carbs and about 30-40 g of protein. Ideas: chocolate milk, Greek yogurt with fruit, peanut butter on whole wheat bread, grilled chicken sandwich



Hydration

- Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!
- Drink your body weight in ounces daily.

PREVENTING INJURY

Training isn't over when you finish your run. Take steps to prevent injury.



Stretch

- Spend at least 10-15 minutes pre- and post-run stretching.
- Tight muscles restrict your range of motion and compromise your running form.
- Stretching combats soreness.



Sleep

- Putting in the miles necessary to complete a half-marathon takes a toll on your body. Though regular exercise helps strengthen the immune system in the long run, at first it suppresses it (especially as you increase distance). Regularly aim for 8-10 hours of sleep to ensure your immune system has the time to recover.
- If you struggle with consistent sleep, set a standard bedtime and wake time. Engage in a relaxing activity, such as reading, 30-60 minutes before bed.



Massage

- Continual tightness despite stretching can indicate a bigger issue. Massage therapists are trained to ease body tension.



Listen to your body

- Noticeable pain during a run may be a sign you need a break. Opting for cross-training (elliptical or bike) allows you to continue building endurance with less stress.
- If pain persists, schedule an appointment with a sports medicine physician for evaluation.

GETTING READY FOR THE BIG DAY



Have everything ready

- Race day isn't the day to experiment with clothing. Stick to dry-fit clothing (no cotton), including socks, and the proper running shoes.
- Have your energy gels, chews, bars and hand-held water ready to go.



Morning of

- Eat breakfast 2-3 hours before the race — something light with carbs and protein (fruit with 1 tablespoon nut butter, toast, protein bar)
- Eat simple carbs 1 hour before the race.



During

- Drink water or a sports drink at a minimum of every other water station.
- Have an energy gel every 45-60 minutes.



Post-race — refuel!

- Hydrate. A sports drink is good option; you need the carbs and electrolytes. Save the celebratory beer until *after* you refuel!
- Take advantage of the carbs and protein offered at the race: egg taco, PBJ or chocolate milk.

Remember, don't try anything new on race day. Stick with the tried and true. Most of all, have fun!

This information is provided by Kimberley Lowry, RD, LD, a dietitian for Houston Methodist Wellness Services. No stranger to running, she was a member of her college cross-country and track teams. She ran in the 2019 Chevron Houston Marathon, her first, with a time of 2:55. She's preparing for the California International Marathon where she hopes to finish with a 2020 Olympic Trial Qualifying time. She runs because it brings her joy and encourages others to give it a try.

