RUNNERS, TAKE YOUR MARK!

Young Athlete Center

Children's HOSPITAL • ST. LOUIS
BJC HealthCare

Washington University in St. Louis Physicians

Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned runner, read on for some helpful tips for the week leading up to the starting line.

- **Begin to decrease mileage:** Don't burn yourself out before the big day! Remember that during the final week before race day, it's a good idea to take shorter runs, rest two days before, and just do a slight jog the day before the race.
- **Check out the route:** Set aside some time to drive, walk, or jog the course for the upcoming race. This takes out the surprise of a big hill near the end that you might not have been expecting.
- **No new gear:** You may be tempted to go out and buy a brand new pair of shoes for your race, but this is a bad idea! New shoes are often stiff and could cause blisters, which can lead to a miserable run. It's best to use tried and true gear that you are used to training in.
- **Create a playlist:** Listening to music while running can be incredibly motivating. Get a great playlist together before the race so you're not preoccupied with it during the run.
- **Get good, quality sleep:** Pre-race jitters can often hinder sleep. Your body works best on at least 8 hours of sleep, so try to make it a goal to achieve this two consecutive nights leading up to race day.
- **Hydrate:** Hydration is vital on race day, but it's just as important during the days leading up to it. Remember to drink when you're thirsty, and aim to get about 4 to 8 ounces of water per hour.

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Your FINAL race preparation should get you right up to the starting line.

Don't forget your final preparations for race day in the 24 hours before the race.

- **Don't stress:** It's natural to feel anxious before a race, but remember that there are people of all ages and abilities who share a passion for running. Bring friends or family to cheer you on for extra motivation!
- **Eat breakfast:** Plan to eat about 2 hours before the race – something high in carbohydrates and low in fat. Eating carb-rich foods prior to endurance exercise appears to enhance performance (more so than protein-rich or fat-rich foods). Examples include a banana, bagel with peanut butter, sports bar, granola or oatmeal. Avoid dairy.
- **Check the weather:** Check your local forecast to ensure you're properly dressed for weather conditions on race day.
- **Warm up:** Do a light jog for 5 to 10 minutes before the race and gently stretch your legs and hips.
- **Pace yourself:** Don't start too fast – focus on your race pace or even a slightly slower pace when the starting gun sounds.
- **Enjoy the race:** Scientific evidence proves that regular exercise – and running in particular – has lasting health benefits!

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