

# Are you on track for the Wilmslow Half Marathon

It is now 2 months to the start of this year's Wilmslow Half Marathon and hopefully your training is right on track. If it is not, then help is at hand.

Physiofit's priority is to make sure you stay fit and healthy during the build up to race day. Try not to be too ambitious in building up the miles too quickly, especially if you feel you are falling behind. There is still time to make it through the race and stay injury free if you follow a few simple rules. The body has the most amazing capacity to adapt to any stress or load placed on it providing that it has time to do so.

## Building up the miles

If you have not done the appropriate training, then the body is not used to the load expected of it and rapidly reacts. The major injury risks are excessive and rapid increases in training loads with too little rest and recovery

**Calculate your injury prevention vaccine – chronic: acute workload** (Gabbett et al 2016)

The recipe for injury prevention is based around a chronic: acute workload ratio. The chronic load is the average of the last 4 weeks eg how many miles you have run (x the intensity of each session out of 10). The acute workload is what you have done this week or calculating what you might do. The chronic: acute ratio should be no more than 1:2. Once you know your average over the last 4 weeks you can add 10% to give you this week's load. Research has shown that as little as a 15% increase is enough to increase your injury risk substantially.

## Cross training

If you are behind on the mileage don't be tempted to leap in to where you think you should be – it is still much better to build up a baseline of running fitness gradually from where you are and rely on cross training (swim/bike/cross trainer/HIIT classes) for additional cardio fitness. Whatever you choose, make sure you have good technique and don't go mad in the first few sessions. You can also use cross training as active recovery so keep the intensity low.

## Distance

Many websites give plans for 10k and marathon training, but these are so dependent upon how much time you have before the race date and what you have done before. Many half marathon plans suggest that you will be ready in 8 or 12 weeks if you follow their recipe, but they assume that you are already doing 15 miles a week as a baseline before you start their programme.

If you are already training, then hopefully you are well on the way to being able to run a 10k and the next few weeks will be about increasing the distance of your long run and overall mileage per week. Many runners factor in a lower mileage week during every 4<sup>th</sup> week to take account of research that suggests your body needs time to adapt to the previous few weeks load. Focus on building up strength and endurance as well as working on your running form.

Aim for 4 runs a week. Two shorter runs and one long run with the addition of one run done at a faster pace (tempo run).

## **Tempo runs**

Tempo runs help to make you a faster and stronger runner and fight off fatigue for longer building up your lactate threshold. There are many types so seek advice but essentially most start and end with a warm and cool down and are followed by running at a specific and consistent pace for at least 20 minutes and longer if able. The pace should be based on one of 3 factors:

- Slightly slower than your 10k pace or the pace you can race at for one hour
- Be “comfortably hard”
- 85-90% of your heart rate max

## **Shorter runs**

You will need to try and make sure that you are doing 2-3 mid-week runs of 4-5 miles to make sure you get enough mileage built up to prepare the body.

## **Long Runs**

It is important to make sure you factor in time for some longer runs. Each week progress the distance and make sure you have done at least one of 10-11 miles before the big day. Don't schedule in your longest run for the week before the event as that is when you should be tapering down your exercise levels ready for the big day. Don't worry about the pace if you are new to this distance just pick a comfortable pace and make sure you get complete the distance.

## **Run on different surfaces and directions**

Don't make the mistake of running the same route in the same direction every time. Where possible mix up the type of surface from roads to trails as the uneven nature of the surface can help strengthen your leg muscles. If you have to train on the edges of roads and pavements be mindful of the camber – steep drop offs can create apparent differences in your leg length and you can effectively place uneven strain on either the shorter or longer leg. Always remember which direction you ran the route previously and reverse it.

## **Buy two pairs of shoes**

Always have two pairs of slight different running shoes that you alternate each time you run. Without this you run the risk of wearing out your favourite pair just before the event and need to buy a new, potentially different shoe just before race day. Research indicates that having slightly different shoes may reduce the load on the body by changing up the stimulus on the muscles and bones.

## **Strength Training**

To build up to running a half marathon you need to build a body that is robust enough to cope with the miles, and that means becoming stronger. The better conditioned you become, the stronger level of protection against injury. If you are doing weight training on a day you run – do the weights before the run so you are not fatigued and lose running form.

Physiofit specialises in the development of athletes of all ages and can provide guidance on how to create a strong and robust runner with appropriate strength and conditioning in a 1:1 or class environment in our rehabilitation centre in Wilmslow. We now have a specialised strength class for runners on Mondays nights. To book a place call 01625 590444 or email [info@physiofit.co.uk](mailto:info@physiofit.co.uk)

## **Technique**

Running faults such as overstriding (where your foot lands in front of your hip) or having a low cadence (the number of steps you take per minute) are major causes of injury so getting your technique checked is key. If you are already getting niggles or are struggling to run pain free beyond a certain distance this could be the cause. With both problems they can be fixed in a few minutes meaning longer runs become much easier on the body. Speak to one of our running physios to get your technique analysed.

### **Our injury advice**

Traditionally the advice for overload injuries was rest. With careful management complete rest may not be necessary if the athlete is given the correct early advice. Reducing the load down to a level where the symptoms become more manageable ensures that the tissues get time to adapt but that they do not become weaker. We usually advocate that a level of pain that does not exceed a 3/10 pain (10/10 is the worst pain known) and that settles by the next day is acceptable, but this is athlete dependent.

Pain is not necessarily telling you that you are injured – it can be just a warning that your body is trying to tell you something. Listen to the message and factor in a lower intensity day or cross train more – whatever you do don't ignore it.

If the pain persists then do come and see one of our running specific physios as soon as possible – the number of people who arrive at Physiofit the week before the race for a quick fix is high and if we address it early, you are less likely to breakdown on the day or miss the race.

### **Nutrition and hydration**

Start to experiment now with what food and drink you enjoy running on. Don't be tempted to try out new gels and foods on the day as many of these upset your tummy.

### **Recovery**

Recovery is one of the most important factors in a running programme. Make sure you include rest days and make time for good quality sleep. If you are smashing it in the gym as well as running, make sure you schedule time for the body to rest and repair. The rest days are when the body has time to recognise that it needs to lay down more strength in bones and muscles if it is to be ready for the next bout of exercise. Be aware of the reports in the news about the dangers of blue light exposure from computers and ipads before bed on your sleep quality and leave at least an hour before you go to sleep with minimal exposure. Rest up the day before you do your longer run in the week.

### **Pace**

Pacing is about not setting off too fast on race day and getting caught out by the pace of the pack – stick to your own pace. Start slower than you finish is the usual rule. Build up during the first 2 miles, settle in to your race pace and then do the last mile quicker to still have enough in the tank to sprint through the finish!

### **Racing**

If you have never done a race before then it is worth using a local park run or 10 k run as a practice. It will help you learn to deal with the preparation before, experiencing running in a crowd and what you feel comfortable wearing.

**Watch out for our Race Day preparation advice coming out soon. If you have any injury or training concerns or would like advice please contact Clive, Mark, Angie or Rich who specialise in seeing runners of all ages and abilities. 01625 590444 or email [info@physiofit.co.uk](mailto:info@physiofit.co.uk)**