

## Race preparation

You've done weeks of training. You've thought and talked about nothing else for the last few days. You've got to the day and there's just a short while before you're going to RACE.

### Scenario 1

You set off from home and get to the race start area half hour-ish before the start, you queue for the toilets, you go straight back to the start line (when you've found it) take photos and jump up and down on the spot, shivering a bit in the morning chill and wondering if you need your gloves and extra t-shirt or not. When the gun goes, you set off and feel stiff and slow – a million miles from what you wanted to feel – and wonder why you're doing this race. After a mile or so, you've settled in and throw your gloves to a spectating friend and get going. In the joy of the race, you forget how horrible that first mile felt... until the next time!

### Scenario 2

You set off from home and get to the race area an hour before the start. You go straight into the toilets (no queue at that time) and check where the start is. Keeping your hoody/jacket on, you then go for an incredibly slow jog at least 1½ times your race pace, for about 10-15 minutes, looking out for a sheltered "private" area where you can do some drills. (*if appropriate you could do a Lunge Matrix before this jog*)

You jog back to the drills area and decide on markers about 40-50 metres apart (20-25 steps approx.) and you carry out some quality drills, including knee lifts, skipping, sideways, bum-kicks and (if you're feeling sufficiently exhibitionist) vines. During each one think about which muscles you are using and whether you are getting the drills right. Don't rush! Enjoy the feeling of your body warming up, taking time between each one to straighten and stretch.

When you've done 5 or 6 drills (on both sides) do "strides" from one marker to the next – around your "mile" pace and almost sprinting, so it feels really quite speedy and FAR faster than you're going to run your race. Walk back to the start and do another 2, putting more effort into each but keeping your body straight and tall – you ARE an athlete after all!

Now take off your hoody, jacket, those gloves, hat and extra t-shirt and go to the start line about 10 minutes before the start. Shake your arms and legs to maintain the warmth in your muscles and bounce a bit on the spot if you need to do something with that pent up energy. The gun goes and you are OFF! Warmed up and ready to run at your race-pace from the start.

Neither scenario is right or wrong; they are just different approaches and I find they make a real difference to the way I feel in the first mile of a race. However, I am certainly not an elite athlete and I will admit I do the same warm up routine I described above for anything from Parkrun to a Half Marathon, although the advice is that the faster/shorter the race, the more warmup you should do and quite a lot less for a Marathon!

### Why do drills?

You don't HAVE to do drills and if the situation is too crowded or you feel uncomfortable doing them, then just do the warm-up jog. However, each drill has a separate purpose and will warm up a specific muscle or set of muscles that you will use during your race.

- Skipping will get your heart rate going – the most important muscle of them all!
- Knee lifts will stretch and warm-up your hamstrings
- Bum kicks will stretch and warm-up your quads
- Sideways will stretch and warm-up your arms and knees – and feet if you can stretch them at each leap!
- Vines will stretch and warm-up your torso and back
- Strides (fast running) gets your legs turning over faster than race pace and raises heart rate to racing rate so reduces the instant stress on your heart in the first few minutes of the race.

There are loads of other drills, but I always feel I want to retain some element of decorum and these are very doable in public!

By the way! **Never ever do Static Stretches before you warm up** – it's like putting an elastic band in the fridge, taking it out and pulling it.... Even if it doesn't SNAP you will have microtears that will reduce its efficiency!! Don't risk it whatever you see other runners doing! Warm up those muscles first.