READY? SET? GO!

MEDICAL ADVICE AND TIPS IN PREPARATION FOR THE CHICAGO MARATHON OCT 12, 2014

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1. Allow your body time to condition fully to any long distance training program. Muscle development will respond quickly over a period of months. Development of the more ‘structural’ body tissues, such as bone, ligament, and tendon will occur more slowly over a period of a year or more. You may have rapidly gained the strength and speed to run a marathon. Still respect any pain signals that develop and trim back the intensity and mileage of your program to avoid injury to these ‘structural’ elements.

2. Please visit an MD or DO physician in internal or family medicine for a full medical examination and clearance to train for long distance running, even if you are an experienced runner. This is a critical factor in the prevention of severe consequences in long distance racing.

3. The only way to avoid overtraining is to err on the side of caution. A few training sessions in which you feel sluggish or just slower should lead you to trim back your training program. The early warning signals of fatigue, sleep disturbance, slower running are more important as warning signals than any marathon training plan. Listen to your body first.

4. Ice is the first line treatment for any ache or pain. It is the safest and strongest anti-inflammation treatment you have available. Apply to any painful or stiff joint 15 minutes, at least twice a day. AVOID ice directly to the outside of your knee if your foot or lower leg becomes numb (loss of feeling). A vital nerve passes by your knee to the foot.

5. Avoid the use of any anti-inflammatory medicines before or during a race. There is no benefit to this self-treatment and you may risk serious injury to your stomach and kidneys.

6. The correct intake of water is very important in training programs. It requires a balance of a) enough fluid consumption to avoid collapse or possibly heat stroke and b) avoidance of ‘hyponatremia’ from excessive fluid intake, a water dilution that occurs to your blood sodium. The latter is a dangerous condition in runs longer than 4 hours also associated with brain swelling, collapse and occasionally death. Use a scale and weigh yourself immediately before and after runs (naked weight). If you have gained weight trim back your fluid consumption. If you have lost more than 1lb of weight you can increase your fluid consumption.

7. Salt your foods ASSUMING that you have been medically cleared to do this. You will lose enough salt on training days of an hour or longer to justify up to a teaspoon of salt added to your diet. DO NOT take salt tablets for possible upset to your digestive system. You may even add ¼ teaspoon of salt to a pint of water to drink before long training runs.
Always go out and buy the next pair of shoes for almost any pain. Shoes wear out quickly, often faster than the expected 400 miles of wear. The shoe may be defective or simply does not break in well. The best result will be relief; the worst is that you have two nice pairs of shoes to use after you figure out the problem.

Use calf stretches (down) and raises (up) preferably barefoot to condition those critical muscles within your feet. They are important and will help to also avoid pain higher up in the calf.

To help avoid plantar fasciitis and other foot and calf problems you should:
1. Massage the bottom of your feet in the long and transverse arches with your thumb or with a golf ball (gradually) avoiding painful weight on the golf ball.
2. Soak your feet in a water footbath with the gradual addition of ice as tolerated for 10-15 minutes.

Daily footwear should include comfortable square toe shoes that absolutely do not squish the toes. Try adding a soft 2/3 (not full length) insert from the pharmacy foot section to gain more cushion and comfort.

Avoid cramping of your front calf and foot tendons when lacing. Avoid lacing the top hole of the shoe to avoid pinching of the tendons. However, lace snug to avoid slip by pulling on the laces nearest your toes then work up toward the ankle and consider adding another 1/8 of padding to the shoe’s tongue to prevent lace pinching.

Run ‘tall’ with a forward kicking stride to avoid excessive stress to overly flexed knees, hips, pelvis, and back.

‘Run the line’ by running with one foot in front of the other foot such as running the line on a neighborhood track. You want to avoid excessive left and right weight shifting and stress to structures like the side supporting iliotibial band (ITB).

Your hips and oblique abdominal muscles can be conditioned by ‘marching in place’ for 30 seconds daily. Gradually progress the height and speed you can march or run in place while standing ‘tall’. AVOID PAIN and use your common sense to cut back if you are progressing too quickly.