

Get Running!

Preparing for your first Road Race

Last month, we looked at some of the benefits of recreational running. With the holiday parties (& gluttony) behind us, now is a great time to Get Running!

A great motivational tool when starting a running program is to pick one of the many Road Races held here in Calgary and then REGISTER! This commits you, (if only psychologically), and sets a definite date for your goal. For a listing of races in and around Calgary, check out www.calgaryroadrunners.com/sched.php.

One of my favorite local races is the annual Mother's Day Road Race & Walk. With music & entertainment at the race beginning, end and along the course, it is a fun event for the whole family. The Tim-Bits Little Legs Race is fun for little ones to get involved too, and there were even face painting & balloon twisting clowns on site last year! The money raised goes to a great cause – the Calgary Health Trust (Neonatal ICU & Special Care Nurseries). For more information on that race, visit www.mdrunandwalk.com/html/index/index.html.

Before starting your program, make sure your footwear is adequate – nothing will slow your training down faster than an injury. Look at the bottom of your running shoes. The tread should be even throughout – if it is worn out in any spots, it is time to invest in some new shoes! Unless you know exactly what you want, I recommend going to a store specializing in running, where the staff tend to be more knowledgeable in finding running shoes to fit specific needs. This is especially important if you have had knee, hip, back or foot pain in the past, or have anything other than extremely average feet!

As for other equipment, all you will need is appropriate clothes for the weather! In the winter months, layering is especially important. While I do not believe one needs to be geared up in all of the latest brands, I am a big believer in being comfortable when I run. Avoid cotton, as it tends to hold onto moisture, as opposed to synthetic fibers, which are specifically designed to wick moisture (as in sweat!) away from the body.

You will want to dedicate 6 – 12 weeks prior to the race for preparation, depending on your current fitness level, the distance you choose and of course how ambitious your goals are! (Visit www.kissfitness.ca to access free training schedules for both 5km & 10 km distances.)

The first few weeks of your program should simply be working on building aerobic endurance, adding 1-2 minutes per week until you can comfortably maintain a slow jog for about 20 minutes. After this point, you can start adding in the fun stuff like hills, tempo runs, strides and other speed work. These training strategies will be the topic of next month's article.

Good luck & Get Running!

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