

Spring into the Edinburgh Marathon Festival

The Edinburgh Marathon Festival is just six weeks away on the 21st and 22nd of May 2011. Most of those taking part in the full marathon should have their training schedule well underway. But there is still room for the newbies, procrastinators, those with busy lives (or all three) to begin training for the 5k, 10k and the Half Marathon.

The Edinburgh Marathon was launched in 2003 with 3,000 entrants, and has steadily grown to 14,370 last year. The Edinburgh Marathon is the second largest marathon in the UK after the London Marathon and this year's effort aims to top previous years for attendance.

For some tips on training and preparation, we spoke with [Graeme Hilditch](#), a personal trainer with more than a decade of experience and the author of five books about marathon training. 'The Marathon and Half Marathon: A Training Guide' is in its 6th reprint in three years. On April 1st 2011 he released his latest book *5K and 10K from Start to Finish* in association with the Cancer charity *Race for Life*, an ideal guide for novice competitors.

Graeme's recommendation for first-timers is:- "For both distances, my advice is to enter the event with enjoyment in mind. Never put yourself under pressure to run too fast and train within yourself." Furthermore, according to his website [fitfaqs.co.uk](#), it is recommended that if a person is overweight, has heart problems, high blood pressure or is over 50 that they visit a GP before beginning training.

"Good quality running clothes are essential if you want to enjoy your running without the fear of developing blisters or chaffing," Hilditch said. "Most manufacturers of running

clothes steer clear of cotton and use a mixture of polyester and spandex to give clothes and trousers a nice feel which don't rub together. I tend to opt for specialist running clothes, mainly because they are incredibly well fitted and last forever."

In order to prevent injury, stretching beforehand and warming down afterwards are essential. [Fitfaqs](#) recommends focusing particularly on calf muscles, quadriceps (thighs), hamstrings and adductors (groin). For further tips on stretching, look [here](#).

The importance of the right gear and gadgets is a debate which tends to polarise runners. "Running Gadgets are a matter of choice", Hilditch commented. "It depends on how much you love technology. Personally, I believe Polar heart rate monitors are essential for any runner as they help you to gauge your training intensity and train within yourself."

Is it possible to run without the gadgets then?

"You can, but once the running regularity and distances go up, you'll soon notice that you're not as comfortable running as you were for the shorter distances". And for running shoes, Hilditch suggests spending from £60-£70 and upwards.

An important concept for first time runners is something called Tapering. Hilditch described this as:- "The gradual reduction of training intensity and duration as you edge closer to race day. It is a necessary aspect of endurance training and it starts in the last few weeks before the big day. This is counter-intuitive to what people would think works, however slowing down before the big race will actually assist in making you stronger. This doesn't mean stopping training completely, but rather slowing it down. The level of fitness obtained through months of training is going to be maintained in the last weeks, and slowing down reduces the risk of injury."

“There is no one specific nutrient that will make you a running machine,” Hilditch continued. “Eating a well balance diet, including plenty of veg, fruit and protein will keep you in good health. Carbohydrates are of course a little more important as your mileage goes up, but there is no need to go overboard and eat excessively amounts of carbs.” And closer to race day there are no hard and fast rules for a diet either according to Hilditch:- “Just eat a well balanced diet rich in a large selection of vegetables, complex carbohydrates, quality low-fat protein, oily fish and plenty of water is the perfect diet. Only in certain cases are supplements necessary, but if you must, vitamin C is always a good one”.

Edinburgh has a wealth of different terrains, altitude changes and ever-changing weather. Hilditch suggested that people make the most of this in training. “Training on different terrains strengthens different muscle groups and is enormously beneficial. Incorporating all types of training is important, but ultimately its best if you do what feels right.”

An important factor in training, which is becoming increasingly well-known to runners is ‘Running Gait’. Hilditch described it as:- “Essentially the way you run, and bio-mechanically what happens to your body, as you progress through a running stride”. How you run dictates what types of shoes will and won’t work for you. According to Hilditch choosing the right type of shoes can redress the imbalance and reduce the risk of a biomechanical injury. It is recommended that competitors get this professionally assessed. This involves pressure pads or special treadmills to guage the type of running gait. More information on the three types of running gaits: Over Pronation, Under Pronation and Normal Pronation can be viewed [here](#).

There are many common mistakes which are made by first-time runners. These can easily be avoided as Hilditch explained:- “Setting off too fast, drinking too much water, resulting in needing a “comfort stop” after just a few miles, or drinking

too little and being dehydrated.” And if a dreaded injury occurs before the race, Hilditch recommended:-“Do not do it! Rest, put ice on it and resume running once it has healed. You’ll only make it worse, and there will be plenty of other races.”

Music is the constant portable companion and motivator, and in particular for those running. Hilditch commented:-“Music is so individual for runners. Some love hi-tempo tracks, others prefer more easy listening music. Personally, the former inspires me and I have been kept company over hundreds of miles by Snow Patrol, Scouting for Girls, The Goo Goo Dolls and The Killers”

A final word of advice from Hilditch:- “Focus and remember the reason why you are doing this.”

So all you runners out there: the sun is shining, the days are finally getting longer in Edinburgh. No better time to start your marathon training!

[The Edinburgh Marathon Festival](#) takes place on 21-22 May 2011