



From volunteering with the Twin Cities Marathon for almost a decade and as a medical member of the Virgin London Marathon this spring there are certain things to do to have a better marathon experience. Here are some basic tips to make your marathon a safe and fun time:

1. Know how to hydrate correctly. Too little hydration can lead to dehydration. Too much hydration can put you at risk for hypo-natremia – a condition where drinking too much liquid dilutes the salt in your bloodstream; it can be life threatening. Hypo- natremia can occur in longer races, mostly in slower runners who drink so much water that they do not lose weight or actually gain weight. This excess water causes puffiness, headache, nausea and vomiting, seizure, and can result in death. Although this is medical condition has a low frequency, cases have been reported at many marathons. If you notice any of the above problems, or if you have gained weight during the race or you feel like you are getting ill, you should be evaluated a physician.
2. Be prepared for the weather. Wear sunscreen if it's a bright sunny day. SPF 15: Protect your skin from UV rays of the sun. Wear appropriate gear if rain is expected or if it is cold on race day.
3. Run a smart and safe race by realizing that marathons can be a bit of agony and ecstasy. Listen to your body when running in the race. A consistent muscle spasm or pain may need to be checked by one of the physical therapists at the first aid stations.
4. On the reverse side of your bib number put a list of any medicines you are taking. If you have prior medical history, list that as well. This will help the physicians on the course know more about your health in an emergency. Its very key if you have chronic medical conditions like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease that you consult a physician prior to your long distance run.
5. Know the course. Travel the course and study it, if you have a chance. Do not split off with the 20 milers or 12K runners.
6. Train for the race. While all marathons are 26.2 miles, it can help psychologically to understand where you might have difficulty. Know your pace and stick to it. If you normally run a 4:15 time for marathons and are having a difficult time, listen to your body. Heat and humidity can have significant effects on a runner's ability to perform.
7. Take care of your skin. This means preparing to prevent chafing. Legs and nipple can bleed from excessive friction. This is common in a race as long as a marathon. Use proper lubricants.
8. Eating carbohydrates the night before (about twelve hours prior) is smart. Using carbohydrates (in the form of race gel) during the race helps as well. Both strategies will help your body to function optimally on race day.

9. Stillwater Marathon is a media player friendly race. This puts extra responsibility on users to be aware of their surroundings. Use the pause button if necessary. You may be listening to "Telephone" by Lady Gaga, but if course marshal or police personnel are giving instructions on a megaphone stop and listen to their directions.
10. Communicate with volunteers. The first aid tents on the course are there to help make sure the race is safer. Let them know if you are having difficulty. If the help you need is not available there, extra ambulances are on the course. The physician volunteer can call for one via a special radio.