

# RECOVERY

## How to Recover After a Marathon

First of all, congratulations! You just completed a marathon. While the hard work is over, there is still some work to be done: recovery.

Postrace recovery is kind of like a box of chocolates—you never know what you're going to get. There are a host of variables that can affect your marathon recovery such as the intensity of the race, the elements, your health, and training season. Every recovery is different, but there are several strategies you can employ postrace that will aid in speeding the rate of recovery, so you don't have to avoid the stairs all week.

## Just Keep Walking

Cross the finish line, get your medal, take a picture, and keep walking. Although the first instinct may be to drop to your knees and thank the gods that you've finished, that isn't the best way to go. By walking, your heart rate gradually drops, the circulation diverts back to its resting state and flushes lactic acid from the muscles. Walk at least 10 to 15 minutes—back to your car, hotel, or cab.

## Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

Eat a small snack within the first 30 to 60 minutes postrace. Save the big meal for later in the day when your appetite returns, and you can enjoy that celebration. The time immediately after the race is more about getting in about 200 to 300 easily-digestible calories from carbohydrates and protein to maintain blood sugar levels, replenish muscle glycogen, and repair muscle tissue. Half of a turkey sandwich, carrots, and almond butter or pretzels will do the trick. Sip fluids during the day to rehydrate.

## Chill Out

If possible, soak in a cold water or ice bath for five to 10 minutes and consider wearing compression tights. Both can aid in decreasing inflammation in your legs and speed the rate of healing.

## Get A Leg Up

Take five to 10 minutes to do the yoga pose “Legs Up on the Wall” or Viparita Karani. It refreshes circulation, gently stretches the legs, and is a great way to internally celebrate your race (especially when wearing your medal).

## Stretch, Roll, and Massage

Wait at least two to six hours after the race to stretch and foam roll and at least 24 hours for a massage. This allows your muscles time to replenish fluids and energy lost and recover from the demands of the race.



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## Give Yourself a Break

One of the most common mistakes runners make is running too soon after a marathon. The best way to recover is not to do more damage by going out for a run the next day (that is your ego talking). Take the day to celebrate. Schedule a massage and do some light walking and stretching.

*For guidance, try this four-week plan:*

## WEEK 1: CROSS TRAIN, REST, AND TEST THE WATERS.

Invest the first week in short, light effort, low-impact cross training activities that will boost circulation, warm your muscles and aid in the healing journey (think: walking, cycling, swimming, yoga, or Pilates). If all feels well later that week, run a short, easy effort run (30 minutes) to test the waters.

## WEEK 2: RUN SHORT AND EASY.

If things still hurt, keep cross training and let it simmer. If you feel good, start back to your normal running frequency in week two, but keep the effort easy and the distance shorter (30 to 60 minutes).

## WEEK 3: RUN LONGER AND A LITTLE FASTER.

If things are still going well and your body feels good, ease back into distance and intensity in week three.

## WEEK 4: RETURN TO REGULAR VOLUME OR TRAINING.

Now that you've slowly got your body back into a regular running routine, you can return to your pre-marathon schedule if you feel good. If you're running multiple races in one season it is vital to invest in optimal recovery time.

