



After the Marathon:

Generally, it takes a minimum of two to three weeks for the body to recover from the strain of running 26 miles 385 yards. Return too quickly and you increase your risk of injury. Some experts suggest resting one day for every mile you run in the marathon, thus 26 days of no hard running or racing! Others suggest one day for every kilometer, thus 42 days rest. Often the determining factor is not how quickly your *body* recovers, but how quickly your *mind* recovers, since you temporarily will have lost your main training goal. Olympic champion Frank Shorter says: "You're not ready to run another marathon until you've forgotten the last one."

The training you do in the three weeks following a marathon should be a near mirror of what you did the last three weeks before: in other words, a reverse taper. Your eating after also should mirror your eating before, since a diet high in carbohydrates can help refuel your muscles as well as fuel them. Here is what to do during **Zero Week**, the week after your marathon.

Zero Week

Sunday: Recovery begins the minute you step into the finishing chute. Keep moving and start drinking, preferably a replacement drink such as Gatorade. Research suggests that refueling works best if done immediately after exercise, when the body is eager to absorb energy. As soon as your stomach can tolerate food, start eating. Most marathons provide bananas, yogurt and other easily digested high-carbohydrate foods. These are good for you. A long walk to your car or hotel room won't hurt you. After that, get off your feet and rest an hour or two. By then, you should be ready for more solid food. It too should be high in carbohydrates. (For a more detailed discussion on post-marathon recovery, read Chapter 18, "Mile 27" in my book: [Marathon: The Ultimate Training Guide](#).)



Monday: Assuming you followed one of my 18-week training programs, Monday was always a day of rest to help your body recuperate from weekend workouts. The same principle applies. *No running today!* No exercise of any kind! Take it easy.

Tuesday: *No running!* Today's a good day for a massage. (Schedule one before the marathon.) Although getting a quick rubdown at the finish-line massage tent may have felt good, a massage 24 to 48 hours after the marathon works best. If you have any post-race blisters, or foot problems, have a podiatrist treat them.

Wednesday: *No running!* And don't substitute cross-training in a mistaken belief that it will help you maintain fitness. You may be able to swim or cycle more easily than run because you'll be using somewhat different muscles, but you still need *rest-rest-rest* to allow all your muscles to recover. Starting to train too soon can delay that recovery. You earned this period of rest. Take it!

Thursday: Okay, you're cleared to run again, but don't overdo it. The Thursday workout for Novice runners the week before the marathon (Week 1 in my program) was 2 miles of gentle jogging. That sounds about right for Zero Week too. Intermediate and advanced runners might do a bit more, but see how your body feels.

Friday: Now is the time to cross-train. Swim or bike if that is your pleasure, but it's probably not a good idea to start some new exercise you haven't been doing the previous 18 weeks. The best cross-training discipline for a recovering marathoner is simple walking. Don't underestimate the value of this activity. Go at most 2-3 miles.

Saturday: By now, most of the muscle soreness should be gone. You're probably ready to resume your regular training routine, but don't rush things. Stick with the 2- to 3-mile routine today. Or maybe take today off entirely.

Sunday: Quite often marathoners who did their long runs together in the months leading up to a marathon like to get together to rehash how they did. So call your friends and schedule a run of about an hour, 6 to 8 miles max. But don't get competitive and push the pace too hard. Your body may feel better again, but it's still in recovery mode.

Now that you're through Zero Week (the toughest week involved in running the marathon), where do you go from here? Here is a 4-week recovery program to get you back up to speed. I've included a 5-K or 10-K race at the end of the tunnel to help you with motivation. After that, you're free to pick your next training or racing goal.

CHICAGO SKYLINE: For those who ran the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon, a good gift to yourself might be Hal Higdon's black & white drawing of the Chicago Skyline as seen from Lake Michigan. This limited-edition art is 36 inches wide by 12 inches deep. The first 25 prints will be numbered and signed by Hal. For information on how to purchase a print, [click here](#).

Post-Marathon Training		
<i><u>Novice Schedule</u></i>	<i><u>Intermediate Schedule</u></i>	<i><u>Advanced Schedule</u></i>
<u>Week Zero</u>	<u>Week Zero</u>	<u>Week Zero</u>
<u>Recovery - Week 1</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 1</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 1</u>
<u>Recovery - Week 2</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 2</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 2</u>
<u>Recovery - Week 3</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 3</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 3</u>
<u>Recovery - Week 4</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 4</u>	<u>Recovery - Week 4</u>

TIP OF THE WEEK: There is no exact formula for marathon recovery. Too many factors are involved, from the condition of the athlete going into the race to the conditions of the race itself. Hill courses, particularly those with downhills near the end such as Boston, do more muscle damage than flat courses like Chicago. Extremes of heat or cold slow the recovery process. And runners who go out too fast and crash usually have more difficulty recovering than those who run an even pace. "Nature takes care of us," says David L. Costill, Ph.D. of the Human Performance Laboratory at Ball State University. "Time heals most of the damage done in the marathon." Through careful attention to recovery, most of us will be back on the road again, looking forward to our next trip to the starting line.

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