

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

WITH 10 DAYS TO GO UNTIL THE BIG RACE IT'S A QUESTION OF STAYING WITH THE PROGRAMME, LOOKING AFTER YOUR BODY AND STICKING TO WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU, WRITES **LIZ COSTIGAN**

Ten days out from the race. Most of the hard work is done and the start line is in sight. It is not uncommon to be feeling more concerned about the race now than you have done during the past six weeks. It's totally normal and it can be hard to know what to do during the week leading up to the pinnacle of your training. Here are a few tips to help you survive the last 10 days.

CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE PROGRAMME

Feeling like you haven't done enough? Maybe you could squeeze an extra session in this week?

Thinking of skipping a rest day? Please stick to the programme for the last week and don't panic.

The hard work is done and banked in the legs, whether you believe it or not. If by chance you didn't get to train as much as you had hoped you can't catch up now so don't even try. You are better off using this week to recoup.

TIME TO TAPER

What is this taper I talk of? For me it's one of the hardest parts of the programme. It involves cutting back on your running the week before your race to prepare the muscles and energy storage systems.

Having been so focused on the programme and being "in the zone", it can be tough to stop or slow down but trust me, it is massively

important and will have a huge impact on your performance next week.

STAY INJURY-FREE

I guess this one is fairly obvious, don't get injured whatever you do! So wrap yourself in cotton wool and let your boss know you won't be in work for a week or so as you're prepping for a race.

Okay, so if that's a little unrealistic use common sense instead. Don't climb any mountains, swim any oceans, be particularly careful outside if it's icy and try to reschedule any strenuous activities that might be in your diary (shopping, clubbing, house cleaning).

For all the ladies — avoid wearing heels the week before the race, give your calves and hips a rest. They will thank you for it on race day.

PRE-RACE MASSAGE

The timing of your pre-race massage needs to be carefully considered. You don't want to get a massage too close to the race and arrive at the start line with DOMs (delayed onset muscle soreness); this defeats the purpose.

Three to five days out from the race is a good time to visit the physio but we are all different and our bodies react differently, so listen carefully to yours, you know what is best for you.

EAT LIKE A CHAMPION

Nutrition is important in the days before the race and it is vital to remain healthy and nourished the week before.

Fuel your body with fresh, healthy foods. Eat as you have been during training, you don't want any surprises on the day.

REST

Get as much sleep as possible in the week leading up to your 10k. As we have seen over the past weeks, rest allows the body to recover and rebuild.

Strike a balance, don't oversleep; this will leave you feeling spaced and zapped of energy, believe it or not. Under-sleeping will put the body under a lot of pressure and the muscles will scream. Give yourself the best chance to be great on the day.

NOTHING NEW

Nothing, nothing, nothing new, ever! This is imperative and goes for everything from the food you eat to the terrain you train on in the last days, do not change a thing.

You don't want to have to deal with a sick tummy the week before your race so stick to what you know. Running in different gear can cause chafing or blisters. Stick to what has been working for you over the past six weeks and you won't go wrong.

If the nerves kick in over the next few days just stay focused on your goal, 10k in 10 days' time. Your body is your BFF this week so be kind to it, you're going to need it to return the favour very soon! We are almost there, stay focused and good luck.

Enter the March 9 FIT Phoenix Park 5k/10k at www.fitmagazine.ie/events

For tips on running, fitness and health see facebook.com/positivefitnesspt and Twitter: @LizCostigan



Week 6 5k-10k programme

To participate in this 10k programme, you should have no major health problems, be in reasonably good shape, and have completed the walk-to-run 5k programme.

Monday	Strength
Tuesday	5k run
Wednesday	Rest
Thursday	3.5k run + Strength
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Rest
Sunday	10k race