

# HOW TO STAY AT THE TOP

**Maintaining peak fitness between events  
can be hard. Follow our guide to get it right**

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**M**aintaining fitness levels can be very challenging, especially if you've worked really hard to get yourself fit and ready for a specific event. But how do you maintain that fitness in-between events? Maybe you've entered a series of events, and need to stay in shape, or perhaps you simply want to maintain your fitness levels having worked hard for the gains.

In this article, I'll explain how you can keep yourself fit and sharp, but also give your body the rest it needs to stay injury-free and healthy.

# 1

## FIRST, CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS!

Plan to treat yourself after your event. It might be doing something you love, or

something you've been avoiding during training. If you have a busy events schedule, your training is all about knowing when to be disciplined and when to relax. Having a treat or a reward to look forward to after the event can help keep the focus prior to it. This might be food, drink, a spa day, a new bit of kit, some time off or a holiday. You've earned it, so enjoy it!

# 2

## PRIORITISE YOUR RECOVERY

Immediately after the event, schedule in some rest to allow your body to recover. How long will depend on the type of event you've done and the timing of your next one, but at the very least allow a few days. This might include booking in a massage and/or a few sessions on the foam roller. Ensure you get a solid night's sleep for the few days after the event so



## TIPS FOR COPING WITH INJURIES WHEN TRAINING

**IF YOU'VE ENTERED A RACE** and get injured while training, it can be hugely frustrating, but there are strategies you can use to manage this time out and maximise your likelihood of being fit enough to race. Your ultimate goal in any training block though should be simply this: being fit at the start line. If you're fit at the start line, you're in a race. If you're not, you might never finish.

### FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO AND NOT WHAT YOU CAN'T

Usually, there's lots you can do despite being injured. For example, when I last got injured, I could still do lots of other exercises aside from running and jumping. With care and caution, I could still do yoga, boxing, core work and swimming. I even safely managed a week's snowboarding. You'll be in a much better place mentally if you focus on what you can do.

### SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE

Some people can be very negative and have a tendency to catastrophise when things go wrong. It's just drama. Find positive people to be around, or people who aren't connected with training or sport. They'll help you see perspective, and encourage you not to overthink the injury or obsess about it.

### PRIORITISE YOUR REHAB EXERCISES

No matter how insignificant or tedious they might seem, get them done! There's a reason you've been given these exercises, and if you diligently do what's been asked, you put yourself in a much better position to make a full recovery and

get to that start line. If you've self-diagnosed or consulted Dr. Google, stop! The internet is a rich source of information, but should not be used for self-diagnosis. Ask an expert and follow their guidance.

### WORK ON THE THINGS YOU CAN CHANGE OR INFLUENCE

If you're injured, use the time to review other aspects of your preparations such as your sleep routine, your nutrition plan, your hydration and mental wellbeing. These are super-important aspects of race preparation which need to be considered well in advance. Also use this time to plan the logistical aspects of your race; your kit, travel arrangements, spectator arrangements, and so on.

### CHANGE THE SCENERY

I find it can be really helpful to have a change of scenery when injured. Take advantage of the training hiatus and get away for the weekend if you can. A change of scene can really help clear the head and take your mind off the race and what you should have been doing.

### DON'T RUSH BACK – FLEX THE PLAN

It's the most common mistake I see, and I've made it myself. Rushing back after an injury or getting overexcited and overdoing it usually results in one thing: re-injury. Take it easy and flex the plan – by this I mean go back through it as though you were starting from scratch, rather than picking up where you left off. Keep doing the rehab exercises, and focus on sleep, nutrition, hydration and a good stretching and flexibility routine to support your recovery.



Try a sports massage to help your recovery in the days after a big race

# “If you’ve been training on your own, take part in a sport that is team- or partner-based”

A post-race diary helps you figure out where your strengths are



your muscles can repair themselves, and don't be tempted to rush straight back into training, however bored you might be!

## 3

### FEED-FORWARD ON YOUR RACE

It's good practice to review your race with a partner or trainer, or make some notes about the experience in a journal on your own. Consider what went well, what didn't go so well and what you will improve on so you're better prepared for next time. This also allows you to clear out any negative thoughts, and set yourself up well for a rest period and the next event. Visualising what you'll do differently next time and holding the image in your mind can really help to focus the mind on race day.

## 4

### LET YOUR MIND REST

Make time for a long bath, a drink with an old friend, a trip to the cinema, or just spending time with friends and connecting with others. An unhappy mind is an unhappy body, and vice versa. If you're carrying a lot of stress, or fatigue with you, you automatically increase your risk of injury several-fold. This is why the feed-forward is so important, as it gives you that chance to deconstruct your feelings about the race.

## 5

### BE MINDFUL OF YOUR NUTRITION

Eating well is as important

Try a bit of cross training to keep your whole body fit and challenged



in-between events as it is in the immediate run-up. You should already be following a nutrition plan that provides you with enough fuel for your training as well as providing you with what you need for optimal health. The pre-event taper is a good time to review your post-race nutrition, and make sure you've bought everything you'll need. Your future fitness will be determined by two things; what you eat immediately after the event, and your rest and recovery plan.

# 6

## PRACTISE INTELLIGENT TRAINING

Over-training very often leads to injury and it's easy to do. I cannot stress enough the importance of intelligent training. It doesn't matter if

### QUICK TIPS

- Sometimes less is more – ensure you plan for rest and recovery
- It's OK to skip a session from time-to-time if you feel ill, tired or mentally fatigued
- Listen to your body – it will signal what it needs
- Use DNA testing to personalise your training and nutrition plan
- Use wearable technology to monitor and analyse your activity levels versus your restorative sleep and recovery
- Don't be afraid to go off-piste – by this I mean, you don't always have to stick to the plan – remember the ultimate goal is to be fit at the start line
- Enjoy the training – it really helps to make the event a success

Stopping and stretching might be a quick fix but don't ignore niggles



The right nutrition plan keeps you healthy, fit and ready for anything

you miss a few sessions due to injury, as long as you're fit at the start line. Ignoring the warning signals is a precarious game. Quite often, it will be something that can be quickly resolved simply by stopping and stretching, but if it isn't, you need to pay attention. If a niggle or ache is persistent then it might need looking at. Not listening to your body will just result in more damage.

football, badminton or squash. Find a yoga class or do some basic yoga poses at home as well to stay strong, supple and mentally relaxed.

# 8

## PERSONALISE YOUR TRAINING

DNA testing is now readily available, and really helps to pinpoint how you should be eating for optimal health and fitness, and how best to structure your exercise sessions according to your genetics. Wearable tech can also be used to monitor sleep and activity patterns so you can understand when to challenge yourself and when you need to rest. Wearable tech amplifies the signals your body sends out, enabling you to train intelligently according to how well rested you are.



# 7

## CROSS-TRAINING

A great way to maintain fitness is to cross-train. It gives you some relief from your normal training routine, and it's very good for the mind to have variety. If you've been training on your own, take part in a sport that is team- or partner-based like tennis,



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