

Ready, Set, Go!

I am excited about race day, but I would not be surprised if many participants are feeling a combination of excitement and nervousness. There will be thousands of people descending upon downtown Grand Rapids to participate in the 5K, 10K and 25K events as well as the 25K wheelchair and handcycle races. Many of you are seasoned runners. Many others may be participating for the first time. In all cases, the hard work you have put into training is finally going to be tested.

Here are a few last-minute tips and reminders:

Attire - The weather in Grand Rapids often surprises us. In recent weeks, we have had snow storms, as well as sunny, 70-degree days. A cool and overcast day would be ideal, but we know the weather may not cooperate. Monitor the forecast in the days leading up to the race so that you can be prepared for race day. If it is cool/cold, wear layers (but not too many!). As you warm up during the run, be sure that these layers can be shed. If it is warm at the start, wear light, moisture-wicking clothing.

Hydration - I have previously discussed hydration as one of the most important contributors to a successful run. Start hydrating 2-4 hours prior to the race, but don't overload on fluids because they can weigh you down. There will be many water stations across the course, but don't drink at every one of them as this can affect your fluid balance and contribute to hyponatremia, which can be dangerous. Let thirst be your guide during your run. You also may have to alter your fluid intake depending on the weather.

Diet - Be sure to eat something prior to the race. You should have a light meal or snack that is high in carbohydrates. This could be an energy bar, granola, cereal or fruit. Avoid a heavy meal and foods that are high in fat and fiber. There will be gels and sports drinks available throughout the course that will help you replenish electrolytes, minerals and carbohydrates to maintain peak performance. Of course, each runner's needs are different, so follow what has been working for you during your training.

Sleep - You may experience pre-race excitement and nerves in the days leading up to and the night before the race. Try not to stay up late. You need to be well rested and have the energy and stamina to cross the finish line!

Have fun! - The most important thing is to have fun. Whether you have entered to win the race, are competing for a personal best or running a 25K for the very first time, you have put in a lot of time and training. This is the culmination of your hard work. As you take those first steps, enjoy the moment and know that you will be running with thousands of others with similar goals.

All of us at Spectrum Health Orthopedics wish you luck. If you need medical assistance, we will have first aid stations and personnel throughout the course who can help with bandages, chaffing and blisters. We also can provide assistance if your needs are more significant. If you are struggling, please seek care at an aid station or from a first responder stationed along the course.

Good luck and see you at the finish line!