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It's Go Time: Last Minute Tips for a Successful Race Day

It's been an extremely long two-and-a-half years since we've heard the cheering of the crowd and pounding of feet on the pavement in downtown Grand Rapids for the Amway River Bank Run. But we are finally here and ready to go! We are so excited to see so many of you come from across the country and around the world to participate. In preparation, there are a few tips to make your race day safe, fun, exciting and successful.

Eat for energy storage the night before

Your preparation starts with your meal the night before the race. We have previously discussed aerobic and anaerobic exercise and the need for carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose in the body, which gives you the fuel you need for your run. Great foods for carbohydrates are potatoes, pasta, rice, whole grains and vegetables. Make this a sensible meal: Eating five servings of pasta won't translate into a better run. That will likely slow you down. Also avoid high fat, greasy and fiber-filled foods as these are not effective for the energy you need and can upset your stomach.

Eat a light meal in the morning

You will also want to have a small and simple meal the morning of the race. A large amount of food can lead to cramping and sloshing in the stomach. Foods such as oatmeal, a granola bar, toast or a bagel are recommended. Don't eat anything new because you don't know how your body will react.

Choose proper clothing

Monitor the weather closely as it can be unpredictable in October. Dress in layers if it is going to be cold so you have the option of removing some of them as you warm up. Be careful not to overheat. Choose moisture-wicking clothing because it will help evaporate your sweat away from your body and aid in cooling you down as you run. Also, don't wear a new pair of shoes on race day. You should already have a comfortable pair that you have broken in during your training.

Plan your day

Start preparing for the details, such as when to arrive, where to go for the start and parking. You should enjoy race day. The last thing you want is added stress that may affect your mental preparation. Pay attention to the recommendations on when to arrive and where to line up. Give yourself some extra time. Many roads will be closed on race day so make sure you have your parking location picked out in advance. And remember to go to the bathroom before your run so you don't have to stop on the course.

Warm up before the start

You should arrive early enough to get your muscles warmed up. Spend a few minutes stretching and do some light jogging before the start as this will help with your run and decrease injuries.

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Stick with your plan

Once you hear the gun and see the runners take off, resist the urge to get caught up in the moment and take off quickly. As tempting as that is, start off at a comfortable, slower pace to conserve energy. If you start too quickly you will deplete your glucose/fuel storage, which can affect your performance later in the run. The first few miles should be easy and then you can increase your speed as you feel comfortable. Pick up your pace halfway through and then really start to push yourself the last few miles.

Hydrate

Drink about 12-15 ounces of water the morning of the run. Don't drink too much as it can cause sloshing in the stomach. Drink water and Gatorade through the course, as needed. Do not drink at every aid station unless you feel thirsty.

Keep moving

If you feel that you are starting to get tired or fatigued, slow your pace for a bit until you can catch your breath. If you absolutely need to walk, do so for a short period of time, but keep on moving forward. If you stop moving, your muscles may tighten up, and it may be difficult to get moving again.

Have fun

You have put in a lot of time, hard work and training and have waited nearly 18 months for this run. The most important thing is to have fun and be proud of your accomplishments.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding an injury or pain, please reach out to one of our experienced sports medicine physicians at Corewell Health Medical Group Orthopedics at (616)267- 8860. You can also find more information about our orthopedic program and providers on our [website](#).
