

AAHS Distance Track — Race Warm Up

Get to the race site at least 90 minutes before your race is scheduled — so you have time to park, find the team camp, set up your gear — and to build in a buffer in case you run into traffic on the way to the meet. Then check to see if the meet is on schedule.

The rest of the day, if you aren't warming up or racing, you should be off your feet! Sit or lay down. Stay out of the sun!

2+ hours to race start: Top off your fuel tanks —

- If your race starts in 2 to 3 hours: something simple like tea, oatmeal, toast or a banana with peanut butter and jelly, 12-16 ounces of water.
- If your race is more than 3 hours away: something substantial, like the above plus a hard-boiled egg, yogurt, granola, etc., some pasta or a lean-meat sandwich.

90 minutes to race start: Eat a small amount of easily digestible food (like half a banana) and hydrate.

80 minutes to race start: Put on uniform, listen to music, visualize success, relax.

65 minutes to race start: Drink 6-8 ounces water and Begin Warm Ups.

- 3-minute jog
- Lunge Matrix
- Baby Skips with forward arm swings, *then Walking Knee Hugs*
- Baby Skips with backward arm swings, *then Walking Quad Stretch*
- Side Skips with arm swings, *then Walking Groin Stretch*
- High Knee Carioca, *then Walking Hamstring Stretch*
- Basketball Shuffle, *then Walking Reverse Warrior Lunge Stretch*
- A Skips, *then Frankenstein Walk*
- B Skips, *then Walking Drinking Bird*
- High Knees
- Light Bounds
- Back Pedal
- Fast Leg High Knee Butt Kicks
- Hip Swings

45 minutes to race start: Drink 2-4 ounces water. Jog at easy pace for 15 minutes with 4 X 20 second light surges last mile.

30 minutes to race start: Drink 1-2 ounces water, put on spikes, relax, more race visualization.

20 minutes to race start: Remove outer sweats, start **series of strides** to help get the blood flowing and heart pumping for a strong start:

- 4x20 second strides @ 10k effort
- 4x20 second strides @ 5k effort
- 2x40 second strides @ 1600m effort

5 minutes to race start: Remove sweats, a few leg swings & final easy accelerations, race!

It is best to start a race feeling overly warmed up rather than not warm enough. Although it may seem like a lot of pre-race work, the benefit of strides and dynamic drills will become evident in the first 60 seconds of the race when what once felt like a shock to the body becomes a comfortable pace relative to the explosive, fast-twitch dynamic drills and strides.

Shakeout Runs

Perhaps one of the most underrated components of a great race is priming the body to run fast by executing a proper warm-up. Getting the muscles loose, the neuromuscular system firing on all cylinders, and the body prepared to run hard is critical to optimal performance. If your body is not prepared to handle the massive request for oxygen and efficient blood flow when the gun goes off, you run the risk of going into oxygen debt too early and fading late in the race.

While the normal warm-up, which consist of 15-20 minutes if easy jogging with a few strides might be perfectly acceptable, elites have long been practicing a little-known technique known as a “shakeout run” to help get their mind and body prepared on race morning.

What is a shakeout run?

A shakeout run is a very easy jog of 10 to 15 minutes the early morning before your big race – think of it as a precursor to the actual warm-up.

Ideally, you’ll want to schedule your shakeout run about 2 to 2.5 hours before the start of the race. Usually, this will correspond to your scheduled wake-up time. Yes, I know it’s early, but: As soon as you wake-up, throw on your running gear, lace up the shoes, and start shuffling out the door.

You shouldn’t be running hard on your shakeout run. The main goal is to get blood and oxygen flowing to the muscles, so a slow jog or shuffle is sufficient. Run easy for about 10 minutes, include some light stretching if you feel tight, and then return to the hotel to get in your pre race meal, hit the bathroom, and get ready to head to the starting line.

For optimal performance, you need to be awake at least 2 to 2.5 hours before your race to be fully conscious and ready to run well.

When to use shakeout runs

A primer for shorter races like the 1600m and 3200m

Generally, the shorter your race distance, the more important your body is ready to run hard from the gun. The intensity required to maintain goal 800-3200m pace from start to finish requires a lengthy and intense warm-up. A shakeout run is another opportunity to stimulate the central nervous system and get blood flowing, which can help you reach peak intensity faster.

Benefits of a shakeout run

Neuromuscular stimulation and blood flow

The most important benefit of the shakeout run is that it stimulates your central nervous system and gets blood flowing to the muscles to help loosen them up. It takes several hours to get your body temperature up and to increase flexibility. The shakeout run gets this process jump started much earlier.

Wakes you up

Similarly, a shakeout run helps the body wake-up so you don't hit the starting line drowsy, yawning, and unenthusiastic about running hard. More than likely, you'll be waking early to get to the starting line on time and a shakeout run is the perfect way to shake off the morning cobwebs.

Calms the nerves

Shakeout runs are a fantastic way to calm your pre race nerves. With months of hard work on the line, sometimes you wake up on race morning with the thought "what if my legs no longer work" – trust me, we all have those nightmares about running in Jello on the big day.

Not only will you reassure yourself that the legs work, but you'll have 10 blissful minutes in the quiet morning stillness to collect your thoughts, relax, and refocus your nerves into positive mental imagery. The starting line is going to be a tangle of nerves, sights and sounds that can almost take your breathe away. Use the shakeout run to reconnect with your inner self.

Helps you use the bathroom

All runners worry about using the bathroom on race morning. Bathroom lines can get pretty long near the start, so emptying your bladder before you leave for the race is a major benefit. Think about how many early morning runs you've started only to have to go to the bathroom just 15 minutes in.

A shakeout run helps get the systems going in the morning and can prevent those numerous trips to the port-o-john line.