

THE WARM UP

To perform well and avoid injury, you need 3 things: warm, pliable muscles; a large supply of blood to the legs; and cushioning around the joints. None of these are available immediately when you start running: it takes several minutes to prepare your body to run well. That's why you should prepare for a hard run with a warm up of about 10 minutes.

In this respect your body works rather like a car. Just as you would risk damage and reduce engine life by driving at maximum speed immediately after starting the engine, so your body also needs to be at optimum temperature and properly lubricated to produce its best performance.

The warm up should start very gently. Ideally, you would do a zero-impact warm up, such as on a bike (as you see football and rugby players doing). This isn't normally an option, so you should start the warm up by walking or jogging quite slowly, so you minimize the impact as much as possible until you have more synovial fluid around the joints.

Some people think you'll waste race energy by spending 10 minutes on a warm up. But this only uses about 70 calories, and you have at least 2000 calories available for high intensity running.

As a final point, the harder you run, the more important it is to warm up properly.