

TEMPOFIT TRAINING TIPS

APRIL: RECOVERY

Optimising fitness for running requires striking a perfect balance between two opposing forces: training stress and recovery.

Training stress is a relatively straight forward concept: Increase weekly mileage and your weekly long run by 10 per cent each, include some bouts of faster running, enter some practice races, do some cross training and strengthening in the gym. Most people have a basic understanding of what needs to be done.

But the other side of fitness, recovery, is typically where we slip up.

And the slip ups in running training can be pretty major. I've spent months on the sidelines due to running injuries that I could have avoided if only I had listened to my own advice about recovery.

So, here's your opportunity to learn from my mistakes and get the recovery right in your fitness regime:

Eat | As your training volume increases, so too does your appetite. This is a good thing. It means your body is turning into a fuel-burning furnace. It's telling you that it needs nutrients to build muscle and replace energy stores.

But where many runners go wrong is thinking that the calorie increase that comes as a response to this increase in training can be all in naughty foods. I believe in treats (I'm a sucker for Whittaker's Dark Ghana) but our calorie increases should be proportionate across all nutrients and food groups (assuming a balanced diet to start with). So instead of just adding more chocolate or ice cream or rice, add in more broccoli, avocado, bananas, kumara, meat (or vegetable-sourced protein) and, yes, a little more chocolate. And don't forget to drink plenty of water.

Sleep | It sounds trivial but sleep is where all the fitness building happens. Your brain downloads and stores all the new data that it's been bombarded with in the previous 16 or so hours, and this includes running-related data (like how to maintain good technique or pacing cues or the positive associations towards running you've been working on). And it's also the time your muscles get a chance to repair themselves and prepare for future bouts of training and racing.

How ever many hours of sleep you can function well on normally, add another 30mins to that for when you're in the depths of high mileage training.

Love | Remember at school when the teacher would use a lap of the field as punishment? Well, to be honest, the running training you're doing is still a form of punishment on your body. You're stressing it so that it responds to that stress with positive adaptations. It clears the mind and improves your health but it's still a form of stress.

Imagine if you treated the special someone in your life with the stress you give your body during high mileage mode. Your relationship might survive a couple of weeks but sooner or later he or she will be asking for some love. So be sure to give your body some love too, particularly over the next 6-8 weeks as the training really ramps up. Here are some ideas: get a massage, foam roll (another form of punishment in itself but feels great afterwards), soak in a hot tub, wear compression stockings after hard runs, go for gentle walks or swims for active recovery, lie with your legs up the wall.