

Preparing for a 5K

First article in a 4 part series

Dan Munton M.D., Sports Medicine specialist at Texas Sport & Spine located at 4545 Hartford Street, Abilene, TX. Dr. Dan can be heard on Dox and Jox each Friday on ESPN, the Ticket 98.1 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

On September 4, 2011, Texas Sport & Spine will be hosting, Movin' at Midnight, a 5K run/walk to benefit the Hardin Simmons University Sports Medicine program and also West TX Rehab Pediatric Dept.

This event is open to all persons from beginners to highly competitive athletes as well as all those who just want to go for a nice walk or run at night.

A 5K (3.1 miles) race is a great distance to run for nearly any level of fitness. It is an excellent distance for the novice or beginner runner because it can be done with minimal training, unlike the longer races such as a 10K (6.2 miles) or a marathon (26.2 miles). It is often the race from which you receive your first race T-shirt. The great health benefits you will receive from training such as weight loss, stress relief, and an overall sense of well being are an added bonus. It also is a great race for the experienced runner as it can be a true test of how to maintain a fast pace over a long distance. It can truly be a test of strength, fitness and speed for all participants. Our goal with this series of articles is to provide you a template for how to train for and avoid some common pitfalls of running a 5K race. You should always consult your physician prior to beginning any new exercise routine.

To begin, you must determine your own current fitness level. Some true novices walk their first 5K just to get a feel for the race. If you cannot currently run one mile without becoming overly fatigued you should consider beginning a walking program. This walking program can consist of various speeds from strolling, easy or brisk walking. Once you can walk for thirty minutes comfortably you can consider starting a beginner's running program such as a 30/30 plan as used by famous running coaches Hal Higdon and Chuck Cornett. This consists of thirty minutes of exercise for thirty days. You initially start by walking 15 minutes away from your home and then turn around and walk 15 minutes back. As you progress you should continue walking the first 10 minutes and last 5 minutes but during the 15 minutes in between you are free to jog or run. Do not push yourself initially during this period. Rather, progress by jogging 30 seconds followed

by walking for 30 seconds. Slowly advance your activity until you are able to tolerate jogging for the entire 15 minutes.

If, however, you can comfortably run one to three miles without struggling then you should consider a predetermined training program. There are multiple training programs that can be found in running magazines or on the internet that range anywhere from four to twelve weeks. We have a four-week training program that we will be including in this series of articles in one-week increments.

Week ONE (four weeks prior to the race)

For the first week you should be doing the following :

Monday: Stretch hamstrings, achilles tendon, quadriceps, iliotibial band, groin, and low back (we will cover these stretches specifically in the next article)

Tuesday: Run two miles

Wednesday: Rest or easy run

Thursday: Run two miles

Friday: Rest

Saturday: Cross Train

Sunday: 30 minute run

Always precede and follow your workout with a stretching program and cool down period of least five to ten minutes.

Next week we will include important stretches to prevent common overuse injuries and will be giving out the second week's training schedule. Other future articles will cover how and what to stretch, nutrition, common runner's injuries, and how to stay motivated for the future.