

Shalane Flanagan's Marathon Training Checklist



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Training for a marathon can be daunting

Shalane Flanagan—4X Olympian, Silver Medalist, NYC Marathon Champion, mom, cookbook author, and coach—is here to help.

Here's her 6-step checklist to train for a marathon like a pro.

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It took me retiring and not running for a year due to two knee reconstruction surgeries to realize that running is my best friend.

I need it to feel alive. I need it to feel like myself. I need it to feel my most confident and my most beautiful.

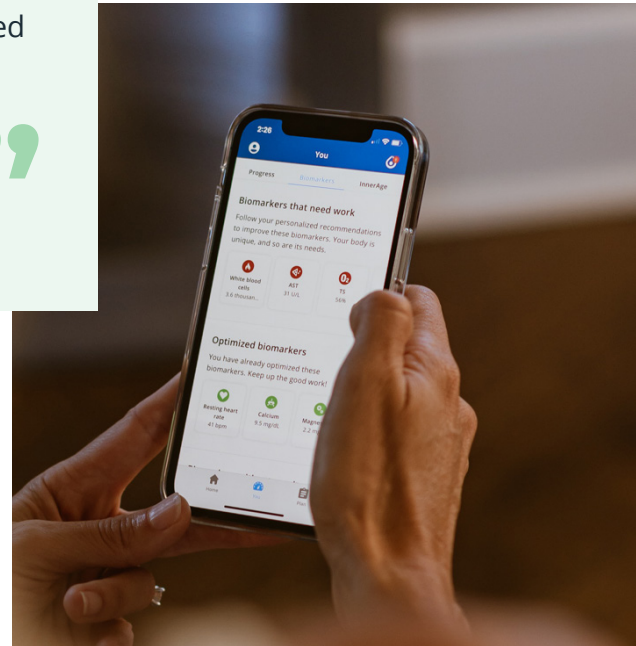
Then came a global pandemic. Everything stopped. I struggled, hard. I was depressed. When I finally was able to lift myself up and return to the road, I started my recovery. With every step, I came back stronger. I needed to run. I needed it to feel like me again. I needed to take care of myself. And I did.

Fast forward to today where the opportunity of a lifetime presented itself. Six major marathons around the world taking place over seven weeks. A total running eclipse that will never happen again in my lifetime. Coming off a year and a half where so much was taken away from us – I want to celebrate running's chance to take it back.



This goal is audacious. It's hard. But I need it to be. That's what makes me feel most alive. That, and a community around me dedicated to the same pursuit. The pursuit to run a marathon – for whatever reason they feel compelled to be out there. I want to inspire a world of runners to reclaim our bodies and minds together.

Shalane Flanagan



✓ Get your blood tested

It's important to know what your baseline is before training for a marathon. And that means getting your blood drawn. Certain blood biomarkers can reveal a lot about the current state of your health, fitness, and recovery. A [blood test](#) can reveal whether you're primed to begin training or whether there are any concerns that should be addressed before upping your training load. Establishing a baseline also allows for continued, calculated, purposeful, and timely blood tests throughout the season to maximize performance and minimize the likelihood of overtraining and injury.¹

✓ Create a nutrition plan to address any deficiencies and prevent underfueling

A blood test unveils potential nutrient deficiencies that need to be addressed before training picks up. Are you low in vitamin D? That could increase risk of stress fractures. Is iron not optimized? Your cells may not be getting the oxygen they need, which will make you feel more fatigued. These are deficiencies that can easily be corrected through a nutrition or supplement plan once identified.

A nutrition plan can also prevent [underfueling](#). Training for a marathon requires an extreme amount of energy, and it can be hard to meet these needs. And underfueling can happen unintentionally. Underfueling may lead to:²

- Fatigue
- Emotional stress
- Decreased performance
- Muscle loss
- Injury or illness
- Nutrient deficiency

Underfueling can also lead to negative long-term effects on immune function, bone health, reproductive health, and mental health. Blood testing can also be used to evaluate potential underfueling. Cortisol, a full iron panel, testosterone, and DHEAS are biomarkers that will be affected if you don't fuel properly. Making a nutrition plan and sticking to it can help you meet your energy needs and properly fuel your training. Not sure what your energy needs are? Talk to a coach or registered dietitian for help on where to start.



Make a realistic training schedule with a coach that includes time to stretch daily

Train smart by setting a schedule that's realistic and tailored to your training level and performance goals. Including time to stretch is essential, as stretching helps with flexibility and dynamic stretching can even enhance performance.³ A typical marathon training timeline may last anywhere from 10-16 weeks, but each person is different. If you're not sure where to start, working with a running coach is recommended.



Keep easy days easy and hard days hard

A realistic training schedule is one you can maintain—and that means honoring both easy and hard days. Inadequate rest and recovery can lead to overtraining. Some signs you may be [overtraining](#) include:⁴

- Persistent fatigue
- Muscle soreness
- Reduced coordination
- Weight loss
- Mood changes
- Frequent illness

Blood testing can also help determine whether you're overtraining. Testing during peak season can provide critical comparisons to baseline and can provide insights into how your body is managing the intense training load.



Add in strength training and cross training

Strength training is often neglected by runners, but it can increase lean body mass, metabolic rate, and bone density and may reduce risk of injury; all of which are essential to get you in the best condition possible to run a marathon.⁵ Though many endurance athletes believe running is better than strength training, the [complementary effect of both is superior](#). A meta-analysis of 93 competitive runners found that incorporating a strength training program two to three times a week for 8-12 weeks improved running economy.⁶



Prioritize sleep and downtime with family

With all the physical and mental stress training for a marathon takes, sleep and time to relax with friends and family provides some much needed recovery time.

[Sleep](#) is also an integral part of recovery. Sleep provides the body with an opportunity to heal from both the physiological and cognitive stressors you face during the day. Benefits of getting enough sleep include:⁷

- Optimal cognitive and physical performance
- Better mood and energy levels
- Improved immune health
- Proper muscle recovery and repair

Recipes for recovery from RUN FAST. EAT SLOW.

Originally published on runfasteatslow.com



Lemon chia seed blueberry superhero muffins

Makes 12

Ingredients

- 2 cups almond flour
- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats (gluten-free if sensitive)
- 3 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp fine sea salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup grated yellow or white carrots (about 2 carrots), peeled
- 1/2 cup honey
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1/4 cup lemon juice (about 2 lemons)
- 1/4 cup virgin coconut oil, melted
- 1 cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)



Directions

Position a rack in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a 12-cup standard muffin tin with paper muffin cups.

In a large bowl, combine the almond flour, oats, chia seeds, baking soda, and salt.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, carrot, honey, lemon zest, lemon juice, and melted coconut oil. Add to the dry ingredients, mixing until just combined. Stir in the blueberries.

Spoon the batter into the muffin cups, filling each to the brim. Bake until the tops are golden and a knife inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes.

Gluten-free: Use certified gluten-free oats. **Dairy-free.** **Vegetarian.**

Spiced chickpea and sweet potato stew

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp ground coriander
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp red chili flakes (optional)
- 2 (5oz) cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium sweet potato, cut into 1/2in cubes (about 1 heaping cup)
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup packed chopped kale
- 1/2 cup chopped pitted green olives
- 1/4 cup chopped dates (or dried apricots or golden raisins)
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro, for garnish
- 1/3 cup chopped toasted almonds or peanuts, for garnish

Directions

In a large pot, warm the oil over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and salt and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the coriander, cumin, paprika, turmeric and red chili flakes (if using) and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly, to toast the spices.

Stir in the chickpeas then use a fork to mash about 1/3 of them up (this will thicken the stew). Stir in the sweet potato and water and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Stir in the kale, olives, and dates and simmer, uncovered, for 5 more minutes or until the sweet potato is cooked through and the liquid is reduced, but still saucy (not soupy).

Serve this on it's own or with rice and garnish with cilantro and almonds or peanuts.

Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days or freeze them in portions for a quick easy lunch or dinner!



Shalane's favorite marathon training salad

Serves 4

Salad ingredients

- 1 cup farro, rinsed and drained
- 1 recipe lemon miso dressing (below)
- 1 large bunch kale, finely chopped, stems removed
- 1 small head radicchio, quartered, cored, and cut crosswise into thin strips
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup chopped toasted walnuts

Lemon miso dressing

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 2 or 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp miso paste (preferably mellow white)
- 1/2 tsp fine sea salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Combine the oil, lemon juice, garlic, miso, salt, and pepper in a glass jar with a lid. Use a fork to stir in the miso, then shake vigorously to emulsify. Pour generously over your favorite grain salad.

This dressing will keep in the fridge for up to 1 week. If the oil solidifies, briefly microwave on low until melted.

Directions

In a large pot, place the farro with enough water to cover by a couple of inches and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, until the farro is tender but still chewy, about 30 minutes. Drain the farro and set aside to cool.

To assemble the salad, toss the kale with three-quarters of the dressing in a large salad bowl. With clean hands, gently massage the kale with the dressing to soften the leaves. Add the radicchio, Parmesan, walnuts, and farro to the kale and toss again. Taste and add the remaining dressing, if needed.

This salad can be made in advance. It tastes even better the second day. Cover and refrigerate leftovers for up to 5 days.





Ready to get started?

InsideTracker can help you with step 1: Get your blood tested. Not only can you schedule a blood draw without going through your doctor, InsideTracker analyzes biomarkers specific to athletes. And you get personalized food, supplement, and lifestyle recommendations to optimize those biomarkers to enhance performance and maximize recovery

See how it works [here](#).



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