

## About Resting Days For Runners

How Important is it to have one day a week of rest? Is more than one day of the week of rest advisable? Post racing rest?

I am not aware of, nor can I find doing a quick Google search, any professionally conducted tests to determine the efficacy of doing a one-day-per-week rest. You can find lots of "standard practice"; but, no science-based recommendations..... So, I'll just muse on the subject a bit.

There are two principal situations: [1] During periods of regular running and training for performance and [2] Following races and other extreme events.

Most running injuries develop over a relatively long period of time, often weeks. To illustrate the point: If you immediately start running 100 miles per week including several track workouts, you will likely develop a running injury after about 3 or 4 weeks. Note, I said injury. However, if you've properly trained for it, you can generally run a 100-mile race without getting an injury. You'll likely be a bit sore for a few days; but, not be injured per se. The difference is that your muscle restoration system has not adapted to deal with consecutive 100-mile weeks. It never gets a chance to fully repair the damage from each week and eventually, something gives and you have an injury. Notice I said "Most" to start this dialog. Spontaneous injuries, e.g., acute hamstring tears, can be caused by a very gross overload. About 9 years ago [when I was 75], I started doing 6:15 minute intervals several times per week. I was fascinated that I could even do intervals that fast, at that age, and forgot how stupid it was. My  $vVO_2\text{max}$  pace was about 8:00/mile; so, I was running at about 133% relative to my  $vVO_2\text{max}$  pace.

All that being said, notice I said: "...start running 100 miles per week". Over a long period of time, you can, however, progressively train your muscle restoration system to adapt to this load. The famous Ed Whitlock ran a sub-4-hour marathon when he was 85. He trained by running 3 hours, 7 days a week. He was probably running about 120 miles/week. Note, numerous studies have shown there is no advantage in running over about 70 miles-per-week, for a long period of time. Ed defies all known running science. We'll never know if he would have been even faster had he rested one day a week.

First: [1] During periods of regular running and training, I believe allowing a weekly one-day rest is worthwhile. I practiced it myself for almost 40 years. Rest rules following races are obviously longer.

If you are training hard and keeping track of your DOMS [Delayed-Onset-Muscle-Soreness, scale: 0...5], you may notice it is creeping up on you. Say it's been 1 or 2, and then it goes up to 3 or 4; that's a clue your recovery system is not keeping up. A day of rest gives it a good opportunity for repair.

Also, most of us do our most serious running on Sat and Sun, two days in a row. Thus, Monday is the best time to let the recovery system catch up.

Do other things, bike easy [it's a different muscle set], swim, do chores, go a long slow walk, etc. On Mondays, I typically rode my bike 35 to 50 miles when the weather was good.

Is more than one day of the week of rest advisable? Definitely, if your DOMS is greater than 2; or, you just don't look forward to your run. Maybe your subconscious is trying to tell you something.

Second: [2] Following races and other extreme events: Again, it appears there are few professional studies that address this situation. However, we can observe two things: Racing professionals race almost every week for long periods. That doesn't leave much time for recovery. And, their systems have adapted to the load. Yet, most professionals rest at least one day per week.

We, mortals, need a different paradigm for recovery following races, etc. The general common rule is two days of rest, plus one day per 10K of racing. e.g. a 10k would be 3 days and a marathon would be 6 days. I suggest taking this rule lightly. There are too many individual factors for it to fit everyone and every level of condition. I suggest you start with this rule; but, pay close attention to your DOMS and how you feel. The main thing is simply: If you're sore don't run. Adapt to racing loads gradually. In general, if you are in great condition and have been racing a lot, you'll find the necessary recovery time to be very short. Many times over the years, I ran serious races 2 days in secession and back-to-back marathons, without a problem. I did get into over-training-syndrome once. I wasn't injured, just lost my ability to race. I ran the VA Beach marathon [~3:30]. Then 2 weeks later Cherry Blossom 10miler [~1:07]. Then, about another two weeks later, the Boston Marathon [4:15]. I hit the wall, obviously. But, no injuries.

Your comments, critique, and questions are most welcome.

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