Final Instructions

Please read these instructions very carefully. In the following pages you will find all the information you need to have an enjoyable Race Day on Sunday 28 April.

We will do our utmost to look after you all the way through the 26.2 miles of the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon. All you need to do is follow the simple guidelines here...

ASK THE CHATBOT!
The Virgin Money London Marathon ChatBot is now live. The Bot is able to answer your questions about this year’s race and give advice to runners and spectators ahead of the 39th edition of the world’s greatest marathon.

Scan the image on the left using the camera within Facebook Messenger to get started. Just line up the image and tap and hold the middle of the screen.

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A big thank you to the Virgin Money London Marathon Sponsors and Partners |
In early April we emailed you asking you to complete the 2019 charity survey. Once you completed this survey you were sent a confirmation email that included your running number and QR code, together with a link to these instructions. (Please note that this replaces the Registration Form that has been issued in previous years.)

The QR code holds your name, running number and email address. You will need your QR code to collect your Race Pack when you register at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show at ExCel in east London, so please bring the QR code on your phone so it can be scanned (or bring a printout if you do not have a smart phone).

You must bring also bring photographic identification, such as a passport or driving licence, with you to collect your Race Pack.

YOUR RACE PACK INCLUDES:

- Your running number, with safety pins to attach it to your running vest or T-shirt
- Your iPICO Sports Tag, with wire twist ties to fix it to one of your running shoes
- An official kitbag with an adhesive sticker displaying your running number (unless you opted to take part in our trial of capes)

While preferring you to register in person, we recognise that in some cases this may be impossible, so you can nominate someone to collect your Race Pack for you.

The person you nominate must have the following: a letter, written and signed by you, authorising that person – by name – to collect your Race Pack. You must also provide them with a clear photocopy of your passport or driving licence showing your name and your signature, and a copy of the QR code that was sent to you.

The person collecting your Race Pack should also have their own suitable photo identification with them. Failure to comply with these instructions may lead to your Race Pack not being issued. Please note: an individual can only Collecting your Race Pack

The following pages will explain how to plan your Race Day – on Sunday 28 April – and collect your Race Pack from the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show.
collect one other person’s Race Pack in addition to their own.

WHERE DO I REGISTER?
You must register and collect your Race Pack before Race Day.

Registration is at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show, which is held at ExCeL London.

EXCEL LONDON
1 WESTERN GATEWAY
ROYAL VICTORIA DOCK
LONDON E16 1XL

You can register at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show at the following times:

- **Wednesday 24 April** 11:00–20:00
- **Thursday 25 April** 10:00–20:00
- **Friday 26 April** 10:00–20:00
- **Saturday 27 April** 08:30–17:00

If you live or work in or near London, please aim to register on Wednesday or Thursday. The Friday of the Running Show is very busy, and the Saturday even more so – you may have a considerable wait to register on Saturday, so if you are able to register earlier in the week, please do.

HOW TO GET TO EXCEL LONDON

**Wednesday 24 April until Friday 26 April**
Please travel to Custom House station and make sure you plan your journey in advance by visiting tfl.gov.uk/plan-a-journey

**Saturday 27 April**
Custom House station will be closed on Saturday 27 April due to building works, so please travel to Royal Victoria or Prince Regent stations.

Ticket purchasing facilities are limited at ExCeL, so we recommend using a contactless bank card, an Oyster card, or buying a return ticket before you travel.

Allow some time after Registration to look round the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show – the biggest of its kind in the UK.

YOUR RUNNING NUMBER
Please look after your running number. Duplicate numbers cannot be issued under any circumstances. **There are no spare running numbers at the Start.**

If you forget or lose your number and still insist on taking part, our marshals will remove you from the race before you cross the Finish Line. This is in order to prevent non-registered runners who do not have a place in the event joining in and attempting to cross the line to receive a medal.

Your running number is likely to be your only form of ID during the race, so please take good care of it. **If you lose your running number during the race, our marshals will treat you as a non-registered runner and will remove you from the race before the Finish Line.**

Make sure you fill in your medical information on the reverse side of your running number. This could save your life during an emergency.

INTERNATIONAL RUNNERS
There are special desks at Registration clearly signposted for runners who live outside the UK.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS
Before Race Day (continued)

**What should I do if I am ill or injured?**

You must be fit and well to run a marathon. Severe exertion during or soon after any kind of fever is extremely dangerous. See the medical advice on page 14 for more details on health and distance running.

Do not take any chances with your health: if you find yourself in this situation you must withdraw – even if this is the first time you have been accepted for the Virgin Money London Marathon after years of trying.

**Withdrawn your entry**
If you need to withdraw from the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon, we will guarantee you an entry for next year’s race – providing you meet the terms and conditions, complete the online withdrawal form by no later than 20:00 on Saturday 27 April 2019, and pay the 2020 race entry fee before the deadline.

For full information, please click here

Runners who withdraw will receive an email link for a guaranteed place for the 2020 race by Wednesday 5 June 2019. If you have not heard from us by Thursday 6 June 2019 please telephone our Customer Services team on 020 7902 0200 as soon as possible and certainly no later than Wednesday 19 June 2019. Failure to do so will result in loss of entry. The closing date for completion of the online guaranteed entry form is 17:00 on Friday 21 June 2019.
The 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show will run from Wednesday 24 April to Saturday 27 April. It's the perfect place for visitors to soak up the inspiring atmosphere of the greatest running event on the planet.

Entry to the Running Show is FREE, so bring your family and friends – and tell all your running companions to come along, even if they are not competing in this year's race.

You will receive a map and exhibitor list when you arrive at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show. All the major athletic brands are present, as are a multitude of other exhibitors showing and selling everything from retro headbands to pre-race massages and the latest GPS devices.

One of the biggest stands is devoted to the Virgin Money London Marathon Superstore with this year’s range of New Balance souvenir and technical clothing. Two stages – Centre Stage and the Inspire & Inform Stage – offer regular talks, advice and Q&As with elite and celebrity runners.

Find out more about the programme of events on the two stages here

WHEN TO VISIT
The 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show will be open from Wednesday 24 April to Saturday 27 April at the following times:

Wednesday 24 April: 11:00-20:00
Thursday 25 April: 10:00-20:00
Friday 26 April: 10:00-20:00
Saturday 27 April: 08:30-17:00

Exhibitor List

2:09 Events Ltd
Abbott
Abbott World Marathon Majors
Abel & Cole
Alton Sports
Anthony Nolan
Balearic Islands Sports Destination
BIG BOBBLE HATS
Bloodwise
Bloomsbury Sport
Body Glide/FlipBelt/Goodr
Bournemouth Marathon Festival
Breast Cancer Care and Breast Cancer Now
British Heart Foundation
Buxton Natural Mineral Water
Cancer Research UK
CEP Sportswear
Chia Charge
Children with Cancer UK
CLIC Sargent
Compeed
Compressport
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Deep Heat – Deep Freeze
Dementia Revolution
EVA Air
Feetures
FLANCILimited
Flipjackery
Flowlife
Funchal Marathon
G Adventures
Garmin
GenevaRunning
GET KIDS GOING!
Gousto
Guide Dogs for the Blind
HOKA ONE ONE
Independent Age
Info Stand
JDRF, the type1 diabetes Charity
KBC DUBLIN MARATHON
KIND Snacks
KT Tape
Lanzarote European Sports Destination
Leukaemia Care
London Pride
Luczoade Sport
LUPUS UK
Macmillan Cancer Support
MarathonFoto
Marie Curie
Massage
Maurten
MBNA Chester Marathon
Medal in frame
Mencap
Mizuno
Moscow Marathon
MS Society
MS–UK
Muscular Dystrophy UK
New Balance
NSPCC
On
ONE PRO Nutrition
OOFOS
Oxfam GB
Pancreatic Cancer UK
Parkinson’s UK
Phabkids
Playitas Resort
Polar
Precision Hydration
RockTape UK
Run Barbados Marathon Weekend
Runderwear
Runner’s World
Running Imp & Bespoke Medals
Salomon
Scimitar
Scope
Sense
Shelter
SportFX
Sports Tours International
Tata Consultancy Services
TCS Amsterdam Marathon
Teenage Cancer Trust
The Brain Tumour Charity
The London Classics
The Primal Pantry
The Race Organiser Events
The Runner’s Wall
The Stick – best self massage tool for your muscles
uRTime
UYN Sports
Valencia Ciudad del Running
Virgin Money Giving
Virgin Money London Marathon Official Merchandise
Vitality London 10,000
Vitality Westminster Mile
WellChild
Worry Less Design
MAKE SURE YOU HAVE:

- Your running number, and safety pins to attach it to your running vest or T-shirt
- Your IPICO Sports Tag, fixed to your running shoe by the wire twist ties provided
- Your official kitbag and baggage label with your running number printed on it (unless you have opted to take part in the trial of capes)
- Access to these instructions

RUNNING NUMBERS ARE NON-TRANSFERABLE
You must not use someone else’s number, nor let someone else use yours. Number swapping is strictly prohibited for several reasons, the most important of which is the danger and confusion it can cause in the event of an incident on the course.

The information you provided in the registration process included your next of kin and emergency contact information. First aid crews on the course provide details of those that have had to drop out of the race, those receiving medical attention, including their location, and if they have been taken to a hospital.

In the event of a serious incident, we contact the named next of kin and emergency contact. If your place is being used by someone else, then the emergency services and medical professionals waste valuable time and your action might cause great distress and concern to your closest friends/family.

NO TAG, NO TIME!
You must wear your IPICO Sports Tag to get an official race finishing time; we cannot provide you with a time without it. For instructions on how to attach your tag, please click here.

Official results and times are based on the time taken by each runner between the Start Line and Finish Line. There are also timing mats at each 5K-point as well as the halfway point. It is your responsibility to wear the tag correctly in order to get an official time.

Spare wire twist ties and safety pins can be collected from the Information Point in your Assembly Area at the Start.

When you cross the Finish Line you do not need to hand back your IPICO Sports Tag, it’s yours to keep! 🔥

If you are concerned about your health in the run up to the Virgin Money London Marathon, go to see your GP.

Do not swap your running number with a friend – we will not know who to contact in an emergency if you do. The swapping of running numbers is strictly prohibited.

Do not run the Virgin Money London Marathon if you feel unwell in any way.

Do not run in new shoes on Race Day. And if you’re planning to wear fancy dress, make sure you train in your costume.

Practise drinking on your long training runs – hydration is a fine balance. Don’t start the race dehydrated, but nor do you need to aggressively over-hydrate beforehand.

Adapt your goals to the temperature and humidity on Race Day. If it is hot or humid, go slow.

Drink according to your thirst – do not drink too much water or sports drink during the race; you do not need to drink at every Drinks Station.

Do not gulp large volumes of fluid after the race – if you need to rehydrate, try to do so slowly.

Do not take anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen before or during the race. Take paracetamol instead if you need painkillers.

Write your name and emergency contact details on the back of your running number. If you have any medical conditions or take any medications, write them down too.
Where and when to Start

Assembly Areas

The easiest way to get to the four Start Assembly Areas is to travel by train to the following stations:

- **BLUE ASSEMBLY AREA**: train to Blackheath Station, followed by a 10-minute walk
- **GREEN ASSEMBLY AREA**: train to Maze Hill Station, followed by a 10 to 15-minute walk
- **RED ASSEMBLY AREA**: train to Maze Hill or Greenwich Station, followed by a 10 to 15-minute walk
- **YELLOW ASSEMBLY AREA**: train to Blackheath Station, followed by a 10-minute walk

You will be informed of your start zone when you register at the Virgin Money London Marathon Running Show. The start zone you have been allocated is based on your predicted finish time when you entered.

You cannot change your Start Area under any circumstances, or move to an earlier start zone. However, if your predicted finish time is now too fast, you will be allowed to join a later start zone. No need to let us know, just join the slower zone on the day.

Plan your journey to the Start as trains are busy on Race Day morning.

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**GETTING TO THE START**

There are four Assembly Areas and three Start Lines at the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon. Suggested arrival times are listed on page 10.

The easiest way to get to the Start Assembly Areas (Blue, Green, Red and Yellow) is to travel by train. The nearest stations are Greenwich, Blackheath and Maze Hill.

Runners can travel to any of these stations for free on Southeastern services from London stations – you simply need to show your Virgin Money London Marathon running number to station staff.

London Underground and Docklands Light Railway are also offering free travel to runners until 17:00 on Race Day for those who need to connect with mainline stations. Again, you will need to show your running number to station staff.

Please note:

- If you have a blue running number you must go to the Blue Assembly Area.
- If you have a green running number you must go to the Green Assembly Area.
- If you have a red running number on a white background you must go to the Red Assembly Area.
- If you have a red running number on a yellow background you must go to the Yellow Assembly Area.

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**START ASSEMBLY AREAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Running Numbers</th>
<th>Green Running Numbers</th>
<th>Red Running Numbers on White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>401–26870</td>
<td>26871–29560</td>
<td>34301–57840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31931–34300</td>
<td>57841–61160</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>61161–73920</td>
<td></td>
<td>29561–31930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Where and when to start
07 Getting to the Start Assembly Areas

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Getting to the Start Assembly Areas

SPECTATORS TRAVELLING BY TRAIN
Friends, family and other spectators will need to pay as normal to travel around London on Race Day. Spectators are not allowed in the Start Areas. We recommend that your family and friends find somewhere away from the Start to watch you on the route.

DOCKLANDS LIGHT RAILWAY
The DLR enables runners to travel to Greenwich from various stations north and south of the river.

Services on Sunday 28 April will start earlier the usual – at 05:30 from Tower Gateway and Lewisham and 07:00 from Bank and all other DLR routes.

PLAN YOUR JOURNEY
If you are travelling by public transport, please visit tfl.gov.uk/plan-a-journey or nationalrail.co.uk

MBNA THAMES CLIPPERS
MBNA Thames Clippers run River Bus services every 20 minutes from central London to Greenwich Pier, where it’s just a short walk to the Start Areas. For more information, visit mbnathamesclippers.com

GETTING TO THE START AREAS BY COACH
If you are organising a coach to take you and other runners to the Start Areas, you must have already applied for a coach pass. Details about getting your coach to the Start can be found here.

GETTING TO THE START BY CAR
We do not advise travelling to the Start Areas by car, but if there is no other alternative you should remember that roads in the area will close from 06:00, with local diversions in operation in the Greenwich, Charlton and Deptford areas.

There is no general parking available on Blackheath without a vehicle pass. If you intend to leave your vehicle close to the Start venue, be aware of local parking restrictions in Blackheath and Greenwich. Public transport is strongly advised.

Please note that there is NO parking in the vicinity of the Finish.
When you arrive at the Start Assembly Areas

Large blimps will be flown over each of the three Start Areas, and signs and a PA system will help you to find your way around. There are toilets, Buxton Natural Mineral Water, Lucozade Sport and tea and coffee available at all four Assembly Areas. Suggested arrival times for each start zone are listed on page 10.

Ensure your running number is clearly displayed before entering your Assembly Area. Please note, only runners with the corresponding coloured number will be allowed into the appropriate Assembly Area. This is a runners-only area; spectators are not permitted into the Start Assembly Areas.

BAGGAGE DROP
The PA systems and screens in each Assembly Area will tell you when to put your kitbag onto the appropriate baggage vehicle. Please follow these instructions:

- Stick your self-adhesive running number label to your official event kitbag where indicated.
- Place any items you do not intend to run with in your kitbag.
- Draw and tie the drawstring cord to avoid items falling out during transit.
- Hand in your kitbag at the baggage vehicle displaying the number range that includes your running number.
- Only official event kitbags are allowed.
- No other bags or suitcases will be accepted, and no other bags or belongings should be attached to your kitbag.

Once you have deposited your kitbag on the vehicle, you will not be able to retrieve your belongings until you are in the Finish Area. Therefore, please ensure that you have all you require for your run before dropping off your kitbag.

KEEP WARM
Many runners wear old clothes or a bin liner to keep warm before the start. If you discard these items when you start running, please do so carefully so as not to hinder the runners behind you. Bin liners are slippery when wet! All discarded clothing is collected and sent for reuse and recycling.

THE START ZONES
Please line up in the numbered start zone (1-8), which has been allocated based on your predicted finish time. Suggested arrival times for each start zone can be found on page 10.

Marshal will ask to look at the start zone number marked on your running number and will only allow runners to enter the corresponding zone at the start.

Do not attempt to promote yourself to a faster zone – start in the correct zone, start steadily and you will be much more likely to enjoy your run. If you are running in an elaborate fancy-dress costume, you must position yourself at the rear of zone 7 on the Red Start or zone 8 of the Blue Start so as not to impede other runners who want to run as fast as they can.

No animals or wheeled vehicles/devices of any kind are allowed on the marathon course, other than wheelchairs that have been permitted to participate. Anyone who disregards this rule will be disqualified, removed from the course and banned from participating in any future events organised by London Marathon Events.

DRINK, DRAIN, DROP
We aim to recycle every plastic bottle used at the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon but we need your help. Plastic bottles can only be recycled if they are empty, so please remember to #DrinkDrainDrop.

Drink Buxton Natural Mineral Water and Lucozade Sport, Drain any leftover liquid before you Drop your bottle safely at the side of the road where it will be collected for recycling. Do not drop bottles in the road, as this can cause dangerous trip hazards for runners behind you.
WAVE STARTS

After being successfully trialled at last year’s race, wave starts will be in operation across all three Starts (Red, Blue and Green) at the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon. This means there will be short gaps in the start release process to allow the course ahead to clear, thus providing a better experience for all participants.

You do not need to do anything other than follow the instructions of the marshals. The final participants to begin their race will cross the Start Line at 10:58.

KEY

- Changing Tents, Baggage, Tea & Coffee, Information, Toilets, Buxton Natural Mineral Water, Lucozade Sport
- Elite Wheelchair Competitors
- Elite Men & Women
- Men & Women UKA & England Athletics competitors
- Route from Greenwich/Maze Hill stations to Red Start
- Route from Blackheath station to Blue Start
- Route from Maze Hill station to Green Start
- Route from Blackheath to Yellow Assembly Area

Assembly Area Entrance

Public Toilets

Public Catering

Red Start Zones

Blue Start Zones

Green Start Zones
**FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

### Important Timings

Based on your start zone number – which is printed on your running number – please refer to the table below for the suggested arrival time to the Start and when zones will open and close, along with your race start time. Screens and the PA system will remind you of these times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLUE START ZONE</th>
<th>SUGGESTED ARRIVAL TIME</th>
<th>BAGGAGE VEHICLE CLOSES</th>
<th>ZONE OPENS</th>
<th>ZONE CLOSES</th>
<th>START TIME</th>
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The Course

Your 26.2-mile challenge starts at Blackheath in Greenwich, passes the iconic Cutty Sark, goes over the world-famous Tower Bridge, and through Canary Wharf, before finishing on The Mall in front of Buckingham Palace. The following two pages contain everything you need to know about the course.

**LUCOZADE SPORT**

This year, Lucozade Sport will be served in new eco-friendly Oohos – seaweed-based edible packages – compostable cups and bottles made from 100 per cent recycled plastic.

Oohos are a new way to get your hydration in a 30ml bite that is edible, fully biodegradable, as well as vegan and allergen free. Consume your Ooho whole – pop it in your mouth and bite. Or if you don’t want to eat the outer package, you can discard it on the ground as it is fully biodegradable.

**DISTANCE MARKERS & TIMING CLOCKS**

Each mile and kilometre point is clearly indicated, and a clock will show the running time, based on the actual start time of the race (not elapsed time).

**THE THIN BLUE LINE**

A broken blue line painted on the road indicates the shortest route and represents the exact and correct measured distance. Please allow faster runners to keep to this line.

**WALKING**

At some point, perhaps through tiredness, cramp, blisters, etc, you may be forced to walk. If this happens to you, please move over to the side of the road furthest from the blue line to allow runners to overtake.

**DROPPING OUT**

If you need to drop out, you should make your way to the nearest St John Ambulance First Aid Point, give them your running number and then wait for a sweep-up coach to stop and pick you up. There will be a doctor and Virgin Money London Marathon staff on each coach. The team on the coaches will ensure your details are passed on to the Information Point at the Finish.

If you do not require medical assistance, you will be dropped off at the Finish Area – where you will be able to retrieve your kitbag and make your onward journey.

Alternatively, you can make your own way back to the Finish Area. Public transport providers will allow you to travel for free if you show your running number. Make your way to Embankment station and our marshals will direct you from there.

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<tr>
<th>MILE</th>
<th>BUXTON WATER STATIONS</th>
<th>TOILETS</th>
<th>SHOWERS</th>
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SPECTATORS
If you have friends and family coming to support you along the course, make sure they have downloaded the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon app. Your spectators can use the app to track you on the course.

The app is available to download from the **App Store** and **Google Play** now.

**COURSE CUT-OFF TIMES**
We are required to keep to a strict schedule for reopening the roads to traffic, therefore you must meet the cut-off times stated below.

The Course Closed Vehicle travels at a seven-hour pace and crosses the Start Line at 11:00, moments after the final participants. If you do not stay ahead of the Course Closed Vehicle, you will be required to move onto the pavement to complete the event.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>7:00 HOUR PACEx MINIMUM PACE NEEDED TO AVOID COMPLETING THE EVENT ON THE PAVEMENTS)</th>
<th>8:00 HOUR PACE (MINIMUM PACE NEEDED TO RECEIVE A MEDAL AND OFFICIAL FINISH TIME)</th>
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<td>TOWER BRIDGE (12.5 MILES)</td>
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<td>CANARY WHARF (18.5 MILES)</td>
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<td>THE FINISH LINE</td>
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The Finish

With more than 40,000 finishers expected in the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon, the meet and greet area near the Finish Area will very busy, so please plan carefully in advance where to meet.

Meeting points are available in Whitehall, Horse Guards Road and Horse Guards Parade – with areas marked by letters of the alphabet. Arrange in advance to meet your family and friends at an agreed letter of your choice but don’t just say ‘See you at the Finish’.

Five Meeting points have been relocated to Whitehall and Horse Guards Avenue for 2019 – these are the letters A-G.

If you have supporters who find large crowds uncomfortable, please arrange to meet them away from the busiest part of the Finish Area on Horse Guards Parade.

Please do not congregate around the exit of the Finish Area at the top of Horse Guards Road. This can cause massive congestion for exiting runners, as well as other health and safety issues for the large numbers of people in this area.

Do not rely on contacting people on your mobile phone, because you may find it difficult to get a signal in and around the Finish Area due to heavy mobile phone traffic on all networks.

Runners cross the Start Line over a 50-minute period. You are more likely to run slower than your predicted time, and after crossing the Finish Line it will take you up to 40 minutes to reach the meet and greet area. Please remember to build these factors into your arrangements when planning to meet people.

In the unlikely event of the Finish Area becoming unavailable, as a result of a serious incident on Race Day or the race being stopped for some other reason, you are advised to agree an alternative meeting place (our suggestion is not within a mile of the Finish Area) with friends and relatives. This will ensure you have a predetermined place to meet that will be more accessible.

Finally, please make sure anyone who is meeting you knows your running number. This will help staff at our Information Points to identify you on our database if necessary.

PLEASE REMEMBER...
Tell your family and friends your running number and ask them to download the official 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon app for iPhone and Android before Race Day. The app will be available in early April.

The app allows your family and friends to use your running number to track you along the route to the Finish Line, which means they will know when to meet you.

To download the app, search for ‘Virgin Money London Marathon’ in the iPhone or Android app store, or visit virginmoneylondonmarathon.com/spectator-info

CHARITY RUNNERS
Running for a charity that has a reception afterwards? Find out where it is – and how you will get there – in advance.

HEADING HOME
Remember, the Docklands Light Railway and London Underground will allow free travel up to 17:00 on their entire network system to Virgin Money London Marathon runners only. Friends, relatives and spectators will need to purchase tickets as normal.
Since 1981, more than one million runners have successfully completed the London Marathon and many more will cross the Finish Line safely in years to come.

Provided you follow these common-sense guidelines, you too will be a picture of health as you cross the Finish Line of the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon on Sunday 28 April.

Leading UK road races like the Virgin Money London Marathon and the Great North Run have come together to create the runners’ medical resource – a unified stance on medical issues relating to running and triathlon events.

As you know, taking part in these events is beneficial to your health if you are aware of the correct ways to train, drink and eat. Participants need to take responsibility for their own health by equipping themselves with the right information.

The following simple advice on how to look after your body will help you to have a safe and healthy race. Make it your priority to be informed.

**MEDICAL PROBLEMS**
Discuss any medical problems with your GP. This advice supplements anything he or she says. See your GP if you have a problem that makes it a risk to run a marathon. On the following pages, you will find further useful and comprehensive advice. Keep it handy and if you would like more detailed information on medical issues related to the marathon and distance running in general, visit virginmoneylondonmarathon.com.

**FIT TO COMPETE**
Running is good for the heart, and while more than one million runners have successfully completed the London Marathon, there have been several fatalities from serious heart disease in runners apparently unaware that they had a problem. Their condition could have been detected if they had had medical advice and the relevant heart tests. A ‘fitness test’ is not sufficient to detect these problems.

If you have a family history of heart disease or sudden death, or have a high risk from high cholesterol or high blood pressure, but particularly if you have symptoms of heart disease – such as chest pain or discomfort on exertion, sudden shortness of breath or rapid palpitations – see your GP who can arrange for you to have a proper cardiac assessment.

Such an assessment may not be instantly available, but continuing to run with these symptoms may shorten your running career catastrophically!

**TRAINING**
Muscular aches and pains occur most commonly after an increase in training. Training should be increased gradually so that you do not suffer prolonged exhaustion. Separate days of heavy mileage with one or two days of lighter training, or rest days, so that your body can refuel your muscles with muscle glycogen.

To reduce injury risk, vary your training runs, the running surface (parkland or hills), the pace and distance, and do not always use the same pair of shoes. Always run facing oncoming traffic and be visible – at night wear bright or reflective clothing.

Stress fractures commonly occur in endurance running and generally affect the shin bones, but may also affect the hip bone. Such fractures are more common in women. If you are a runner and have noticed a gradual increase in hip or groin pain with running training, or during a race, you are advised to stop and seek medical attention. Early diagnosis and management will prevent a potentially more serious injury from occurring.

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**FINAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Medical Advice

Read the following marathon medical advice carefully before you embark on your next 26.2-mile challenge, says Medical Director Professor Sanjay Sharma.
ILLNESS AND TRAINING
If you have flu, a feverish cold or a tummy bug, do not train until you have fully recovered — then start gently and build up gradually. Do not attempt to catch up on lost mileage after illness or injury — this may cause further damage. If you have flu it can take as much as a month to recover. If you cannot run 15 miles comfortably one month before a marathon, you will not manage it in safety or enjoy it — please do not run if this is the case.

DRINKING
Fluid lost in sweat must be replaced otherwise your body becomes dehydrated (short of water) and less efficient. Alcoholic drinks, tea and coffee are dehydrating. Take plenty of non-alcoholic drinks, especially when training in hot weather. Drink enough to keep your urine a pale straw colour.

Drink plenty of liquids after training, especially long runs, and practise drinking during longer training runs. Try Lucozade Sport (which will be handed out during the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon) in training to see if you like it. It tastes quite different after 20 miles, and drinking on the run needs practice.

Drink plenty of fluids, but preferably no alcohol, in the two days leading up to a race. Do not drink excessively just before a race, during a race or gulp water after a race as you may develop hyponatraemia (see ‘Drinking Safely’, below).

DRINKING ON THE DAY
Start every race well hydrated, and if you are not already bursting, drink half a pint (250ml) of water or sports drink in the half hour before the start. Do not be greedy and take extra bottles of drinking water to pour over yourself, as you may be depriving slower runners of much-needed drinks. If it is hot on the day of the 2019 Virgin Money London Marathon, additional water will be provided and showers will be set up on the course to help runners to cool down.

DRINKING SAFELY
Drinking too little on the run can lead to problems, as you need to replace some of the fluid you lose as sweat. Drinking too much can be very dangerous and lead to hyponatraemia (water intoxication), fits and even death.

Drink when you feel the need and do not gulp large volumes of fluids before, during or after the race. Your needs vary with your build, your speed and above all the weather.

Faster runners (under 3:30 for a marathon) on a warm day may need as much as a litre of fluid per hour (two pints). Slower runners should need to drink less, particularly on a cool day, and should not drink more than 500ml of fluid per hour.

At the Virgin Money London Marathon there will be frequent Buxton Natural Mineral Water stations so you do not need to drink at every one — just swallow a mouthful of water occasionally. If you’ve trained successfully with Lucozade Sport, have that as well.

After the Finish do not drink large amounts of water. It can be quite normal to not pass urine for several hours after a marathon. You can only rehydrate (replace lost fluids) gradually over the next 24 to 48 hours. Try to eat some salty food as well as spacing out your drinks. This way you will not get hyponatraemia and will still replace the water, salt and glycogen lost during the marathon.

EATING
Large doses of supplementary vitamins and minerals (such as iron) are not essential and produce no benefit if you are on a healthy, balanced diet, but additional vitamin C in small doses is reasonable when fresh fruit and vegetables are in short supply. Training (with adequate rest) helps you to sustain a high level of muscle glycogen as long as you eat enough carbohydrate. If you can, eat within two hours of your long runs. This helps to rapidly replace the muscle glycogen and speeds recovery.

Do not change your normal diet drastically in the last week before a marathon, but eat less protein (meat) and eat more carbohydrate (pasta, bread, potatoes, cereals, rice and sweet things), especially for the last three days when you should also be markedly reducing your training (tapering).

This loads the muscles with glycogen and delays or prevents you ‘hitting the wall’. Unless you reduce your protein intake, you will not eat enough carbohydrate. (Not all runners are helped by first depleting carbohydrate with a long run and low-carb diet and then loading, as this can make your muscles feel very heavy.)

FEELING UNWELL?
Do not run if you feel unwell or have just been unwell, even if you are raising money for charity. Most medical emergencies occur in people who have been unwell but do not wish to miss the event. If you feel feverish, have been vomiting, have had severe diarrhoea or any chest pains, or otherwise feel unwell, it is unfair to you, your family and your charity to risk serious illness and become a medical emergency. You are unlikely to do yourself justice. There will be many other races.

ON THE DAY
Wear appropriate clothes for the weather.
when you’re racing. On a cold, wet day you can become very cold if you reduce your running pace or walk. A hat and gloves will prevent heat loss and are easily carried. If it is hot, wear loose mesh clothing, start slowly and, if possible, run in the shade. Please don’t wear multiple layers and don’t try to attempt a personal best. Use shoes you know from experience will not give you blisters.

AT THE FINISH
Once you have completed a race, do not stand about getting cold. Keep walking, especially if you feel dizzy, and drink to replace lost liquid. Get your kit and change into warm, dry clothing. Foil blankets will not stop you from becoming cold. Keep on drinking slowly and have something to eat. Some runners feel faint more than half an hour after finishing a race, often because they have taken insufficient fluid and/or not eaten anything. Again, do not drink excessively.

Professor Sanjay Sharma
BSc (Hons), MD, FRCP (UK), FESC, is Professor of Cardiology at St George’s, University of London and the Medical Director of the Virgin Money London Marathon, The Vitality Big Half, the Vitality London 10,000 and Prudential RideLondon.

Follow Professor Sharma on Twitter @SSharmacardio

Think Before You Drink

Adequate preparation for a marathon requires appropriate nutrition, hydration and rest. Athletes often consume isotonic, carbohydrate and protein drinks, as well as energy gels and bars purchased in sports and health-food shops in preparation for the event, which is considered safe practice.

However, over the last two decades there have been an increasing number of commercially available compounds that claim to enhance performance. Some have been found to contain substances banned in other countries and other products (such as steroids) that are banned for use among competitive athletes. Such products are usually purchased via the internet and should not be used by anybody training for a sports event like the Marathon.

Runners using performance-enhancing compounds that have not been licensed and regulated properly may experience serious side effects and increase their risk of developing heart disturbances that culminate in sudden death. There have been well-publicised cases of runners inadvertently using compounds in an attempt to help them fight fatigue during endurance events, and this caused detrimental effects on their health, resulting in their death.

In one recent case, toxicology identified traces of DMAA, which is an amphetamine-like substance. Although banned in sport, the product was legally available at the time and advertised as a powerful performance enhancing agent, and the warnings associated with the potential harmful ingredients were not highlighted on the product. Runners should avoid consuming unregulated substances bought over the internet. Certain painkillers termed non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as brufen or naproxen can cause problems with the kidneys in states of dehydration, and should be avoided within 48 hours of running the marathon. Muscular pain during this period should be treated with paracetamol.

The 2007 London Marathon was the second hottest in its 39-year history and was sadly noteworthy for the death of 22-year-old David Rogers from hyponatraemia. There were 12 other cases of hyponatraemia the year before, six of whom required emergency treatment in hospital.

Again, it is likely that all of these runners drank more than necessary for the hot conditions, despite the official advice given by the London Marathon on safe drinking during the race. The 1996 London Marathon was run on a similarly hot day and, while there were complaints about the water running out, we had no significant cases of hyponatraemia.

In 2003 there were plenty of drinks available for what was another warm marathon day but on this occasion we had 15 hospital cases of hyponatraemia. Many runners are drinking too much! The Virgin Money London Marathon has many Drinks Stations to ease congestion and allow access for the 41,000 expected runners, but supplies far more drinks than are needed. This ensures there is enough for everyone, including the slower runners at the back.

You do NOT need to drink at every water or Drinks Station. THINK before you DRINK.
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