

# HOW TO START, FINISH AND STAY STRONG IN THIS BOOMING SPORT

By  
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Bear  
Brook  
Trail  
Marathon  
2013

# ON THE RUN

**Jane C. Hoffmann** follows a gluten-, dairy- and soy-free diet. She has also completed two Boston marathons and countless half marathons, but she now favors "ultra" trail races: 30-plus miles of twists and turns along uneven, wooded paths. Think of it as the original Tough Mudder or Spartan Race.

An active member of the L Street Running Club, a premier group out of South Boston, Massachusetts, Hoffmann says that her preferred races are "a little more fatiguing on the body."

*A little?*  
For some, running can be torturous, grueling. For others, like Hoffmann, it's an escape, a way of being.

The health benefits of running are many: better joint health, weight loss, a boost in brain function and increased happiness, to name a few. Spending even a short amount of time jogging at any speed will improve cardiovascular health and make you feel stronger. And when you finish, there is no better reward than the runner's high—and bragging rights.

If you are looking for ways to make your gluten-free life healthier, getting out on the road or trail might be the answer. You may have to make a few adjustments to accommodate your diet depending on the kind of races you

run, but you'll mostly be just like everyone else trotting along the track. And running can help burn through the calories of eaten packed into processed gluten-free foods.

## MOTIVATION

Ask runners why they do it, and you'll get a range of answers. Some run for their own enjoyment, others are training for a race and still others crave the feeling of pushing their bodies to the limit.

No matter the motivation, the feeling of falling into a comfortable pace becomes Zen-like. "I run for my head," Hoffmann explains. "It calms me down almost in a meditative way [and is] an amazing way to process things, life events, decisions, upcoming endeavors."

It's not always that easy to jump right into running or exercise in general. Physically it may be as easy as lacing up some sneakers and putting one foot in front of the other, but getting into the proper mindset can be a challenge. And running is all about the mental component—from simply getting out the door to halfway through the route when the mind says, "No, stop. I can't," even though the body feels fine. It's important to set realistic goals and, if you

need to, find a friend to team up with and keep you on a schedule.

Of course no one is going to get up one day and set off to run a marathon distance without having even put in a mile. Runners should start small. A typical 12-week training program for a half marathon, for example, includes running two to three miles twice a week, cross-training two days a week and going on a long run that increases in length once a week. The other two days are for rest.

## PASTA AND PERFORMANCE

Eating right, particularly before a long run or race, also affects performance, and most athletes "carb up" on pasta, bread and other carbohydrate-heavy items. But for those following a gluten-free diet, this pre-run tradition isn't so easy.

"I had to go heavy with potatoes and rice," says Hoffmann, who turns out to be a potato aficionado, eating them as snacks topped with peanut butter, Nutella and even coconut oil. And she doesn't discriminate when it comes to tubers—sweet, russet, yams, they're all her friends. While in training, Hoffmann also consumes a large amount of protein—meat, fish, powders such as Tailwind Nutrition Endurance Fuel and super starches including those from Generation UCAN, both of which are gluten free.

While on a run or a long race, it's important to stay nourished and hydrated. As Hoffmann puts it, "Water is your big friend."

During her 50-mile, 11-hour journeys through the woods, she brings a bag packed with gluten-free snacks, powders and gels. The latter are like no-nonsense gummy bears teeming with vitamins, protein and electrolytes that are help-



ful for replenishing the body mid-run. Honey Stinger's gels, for instance, are honey-based, gluten-free energy chews made almost entirely of organic ingredients.

Once the run is over, it's important to put calories back into your body. "If you run really long," Hoffmann says, "your body is stripped down. And you're sick of the food [you've brought with you]. It's hard to know what your body needs most when you're in a state of exertion."

At most races, organizers host a finish-line reception, often filled with music, food and beverages. It's a nice way to unwind, catch your breath and cheer on other runners as they cross the finish line.

Typical snacks offered include naturally gluten-free items such as bananas and nuts, but otherwise, it's a smorgasbord of gluten-containing carbs. To avoid fainting at the finish line, Hoffmann packs edibles that can withstand hours in a cooler. Then she goes right for the good stuff: a hamburger. "At that point," she says, "it's all about what you think you've earned."

It's not that event organizers don't think of the gluten-free contingent. It's merely about ratio. Gluten-free runners usually make up a small portion of all the athletes in a race. But Hoffmann says that once she inquires, organizers are willing to accommodate her if they can. Gluten-free

runners should always ask about or suggest ways to get safe gluten-free food, she advises.

With longer, warmer days upon us, runners will be out in full force, and race events both big and small will begin popping up, meaning this is a great time to hit the road or trail to start running.

"There is a component with finishing a race that one has really trained hard for that just feels amazing inside and out," Hoffmann says. "And that feeling can linger for weeks."

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*Gluten-Free Living and is training for her second half marathon.*

## Runs with a TWIST

### Making Tracks for Celiac's

This year marks the 14th anniversary of Making Tracks for Celiac's, a traditional run/walk that takes place across the United States at different times throughout the year, though many occur in the spring. The race has raised more than \$2.5 million for the Center for Celiac Research and Treatment now at Massachusetts General Hospital, 75 percent of which goes to research and 25 percent to community organizations across the country.

Race length varies according to location, and so far, five events are planned for 2015: Baltimore, Des Moines, Rochester (New York), Syracuse and Tri-county Michigan. Participants set up their own donation pages in order to raise funds from family and friends before hitting the pavement and then stick around after to enjoy a plethora of gluten-free replenishments. The Twin Cities in Minnesota, which had hosted one of the biggest Making Tracks for Celiac's events, are not holding one this year, but keep an eye out for it in years to come. Check celiacwalk.org to find a race in your area.

### The Color Run

The Indian festival of Holi combined with a really fun party with a 5K race thrown into the mix, The Color Run is all about fun.

The run is not timed, so participants needn't worry about who finishes first. In fact the slower, the better. After all, the whole point of this event is that runners get

covered in a rainbow of powder tossed their way at each kilometer along the course. Participants are even asked to wear all white so that the vibrant colors really show.

This international event is topped off with a huge Finish Festival, where runners themselves get to throw colorful powder while dancing to live music. KIND Healthy Snacks is an event sponsor; good news for gluten-free participants who can enjoy all the company's products. A night race is also available, during which runners glow in the dark as they navigate through the course, and this year, the run is turning the fun up a notch with the glitter-filled Shine Tour. Did someone say confetti cannons? Bring the kids—this is a family-friendly event!

### Spartan Race

Get in touch with your inner warrior as you complete a three-, eight- or 12-mile obstacle course covered in mud and water. In addition to running, you'll also be climbing and jumping, so this is not an event for the faint at heart.

Every 15 minutes, more than 250 racers set off in a wave, facing primal challenges such as leaping over mud pits and sometimes into them, carrying large boulders and trying not to get caught up in barbed wire.

There is a kids' version of the Spartan, so this could make for a family day out. Aid stations line the course, and participants are allowed to bring their own food provided that they have it at the

start line. Upon finishing the race, grab a banana or some Paleo Ranch Jerky. Then enjoy live music and browse professional photos taken of you along the course.

### Tough Mudder

If you're all about getting dirty and working as a team, then the Tough Mudder is the race for you. The top mantra of this obstacle course is teamwork—in fact each participant takes an oath before the starting whistle, promising to "put camaraderie before course time" and to "help fellow mudders complete the course."

This supportive environment emulates the spirit of the charity it benefits, the Wounded Warrior Project. With 10,000 to 15,000 participants in every event, you would think it's tough to get lost in the crowd, but just the opposite is true. From jumping into a giant mud pit to scaling a halfpipe, navigating monkey bars on a human hamster wheel to running through 1,000 electrified dangling wires, team members and random participants alike encourage and coach each other along the entire 10 to 12 miles. Kids can get in on the fun as well with the one-mile Mini Mudder sponsored by Fruit Shoot, a line of all-natural kids' fruit drinks. Though outside food and drinks are not allowed, exceptions are made for those with dietary restrictions. Select aid stations along the course will provide bananas.

### Wicked Wine Run

There are many food-themed runs out there, but as you can probably

imagine, most of them feature foods that are not gluten free, such as Twinkies, hot dogs and corn dogs.

However one run may get your feet moving, The Wicked Wine Run is for folks 21 or older, with event locations mainly in Texas and California. Additional dates are quickly being added in Missouri, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington.

There are three options for racing a 5K with wine at the end, a 1K tasting walk with four wine stations along the way, or a combination of the two. This is a fun, costume-wearing crowd enjoying more of a party atmosphere than a competitive event. If you don't see a race near you, write in to get the grapes rolling. As wine is naturally gluten free, you should be safe here. At the end of the race, enjoy a bash featuring more wine, live bands and, in most cases, food trucks that sometimes offer gluten-free options.

### Superhero Scramble

If you were one of those kids who dreamed of being a superhero, then don your cape and grab your sidekick for the Superhero Scramble. Be surrounded by your fellow protectors of the universe while you jump, soar and fight your way along four, eight or 13 miles filled with obstacles such as scaling walls, jumping over fire and sliding down a chute of slime. After the race, which is held both during the day and at night, stick around for the after party, which features live entertainment and music, plus refreshments.

## WHAT'S IN THAT POWDER?

If you want to do The Color Run But are wary of what exactly is in the tie-dyed cloud floating its way toward your face and mouth, fear not. The non-toxic color is made from a gluten-free Melojel cornstarch base that is tinted with food-grade dyes.



## TRADITIONAL RACES

### 5K

The shortest of the traditional race distances, a 5K equates to 3.1 miles. This type of race stands on its own or can be incorporated into a larger marathon event. It's also a popular distance for charity fundraisers as it can be completed by those who would prefer to walk or do a run/walk combination. Beginning runners often use the 5K to get a taste of competition, and in many instances, children are also allowed to participate.

### 10K

Mid-level runners will be comfortably running a 10K, which is 6.2 miles. It's a nice stepping stone in the race world, but, unfortunately, formal 10Ks are a little harder to come by. Perhaps they're simply being overlooked by organizers who figure that beginning runners do a 5K and everyone else is likely on board for at least a half marathon. That said, those runners gearing up for a longer race sometimes coordinate their six-mile training run to coincide with a 10K event.

### Half marathon

Those testing the racing waters to figure out if they have what it takes to do a full marathon typically start out running a half. Its 13.1 miles makes for a nice distance that certainly pushes mental and physical limits but is still manageable enough to train for. While preparing, runners

should absolutely get up to 11 miles; the rest can be gutted out. This is also a distance where hydration and nourishment really play a role, so plan ahead according to how your body behaves during training.

### Marathon

You've seen them on television or in person in major cities around the globe. You've passed cars with the 26.2 bumper stickers. Marathons are the kings of the running world, the grandest being the Big Six Boston, Berlin, Chicago, London, New York City and Tokyo. In training, runners get up to at least 20 miles for a long run and typically log about 40 hours of running per week for about six months. An important part of the process comes toward the end of training, which calls for a tapering down of the weekly mileage in order to decrease the amount of stress to the body.

### Ultra

For those who just can't get enough of racing and running, ultra races are any distance greater than a marathon. Standard distances are 50K (32.2 miles), 75K (46.6 miles), 50 miles and 100 miles—"for the real crazies," Hoffmann says with a laugh. Obviously these are races that take training to an entirely different level and often include following behind another runner whose sole job is to keep a steady, manageable pace.



## Hydration station

Along any race course, you will find aid stations with water or sports drinks like Gatorade. You should research how many stations will be along your course. Most drinks are gluten free, so you are likely to be safe, but you should check ahead of time to make sure there's nothing that contains gluten. "It's no fun to do a race and have to skip aid stations," runner Jane Hoffmann notes.

Here is how you can take advantage of an aid station without hurting your race time:

Yes, stop at an aid station if you need it. Skipping one to save a few seconds will hurt you in the end if you have to walk due to fatigue.

When you approach an aid station, grab a cup, move out of the other runners' way, come to a stop, take a big sip and then slowly trot off, finishing your cup. Trying to run and sip a full cup will just end up in a mess and creates a possible choking hazard.

If you are overheated, grab a second cup and pour it over your head.

When finished, toss your cup to the ground. The volunteers manning the aid station will take care of cleanup.

