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## **The Importance of Base Training**

**By Dr. Cindy Lewis, Chiropractor and Multisport Coach**

An endurance athletes training plan should be broken up into four macrocycles throughout the year: general preparation phase (base training), specific preparation phase, competitive phase and recovery or off-season. When these phases take place depends on the timing of the athletes "A" race, or the race where the athlete really wants to perform at their best.

For those of you competing in the Toronto Women's Half Marathon, or any other late spring/early summer races, you are in your base training phase. This might be considered the most important phase of all, as this is where you log the long slow miles, allowing your muscles, tendons and bones to adapt to the repetitive stress and teaching your body how to metabolize fat for fuel. Through our experience working with athletes at Absolute Endurance Training and Therapy, we have found that many runners underestimate the importance of base training. We have found that runners either skip this phase altogether or they train at too high of an intensity. During the base training phase, it is important to progress your mileage in a safe and effective way and to do those long slow runs just as their name describes – long and slow.

For most runners it is safe to progress your running at 5-15% per week, through a combination of three variables: frequency, intensity and volume. During the base training phase, we are dealing for the most part with "frequency" and "volume" of running. When building your training schedule, ensure that your long runs are built using the 5-15% rule, but also that your total weekly running mileage follows the same principle of progression and overload.

A running schedule should also have built in recovery periods. So, even though one of your goals during the base training phase is to build up that long slow distance, you also want to make sure you have time to recover so your body can rest and get stronger. It is during these recovery periods that our bodies "supercompensate", or get stronger than they were before the preceding work period. Aside from recovery days between harder or longer workouts, built in recovery weeks promote this supercompensation. For most runners under 50, the optimal cycle is a 3 week build (where you increase progression and overload by 5-15% per week) to a 1 week recovery period. During the recovery period you are still running – the volume simply decreases. Most runners over 50 better adapt to a 2 week build: 1 week recovery cycle.



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Building a proper training calendar that periodizes your year or season into these four phases (general preparation/base training, specific preparation, competitive and recovery) is critical to ensure you perform at your best and also to ensure your training is safe and decrease your risk of overtraining or overuse injuries.

*The coaches and professionals at Absolute Endurance Training and Therapy work with athletes every day to help them build safe and effective endurance training programs. For more information on this and other services, see our website at [www.absoluteendurance.com](http://www.absoluteendurance.com) or email [cindy@absoluteendurance.com](mailto:cindy@absoluteendurance.com) or [alan@absoluteendurance.com](mailto:alan@absoluteendurance.com).*