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Introducing Speed Work into your Training Plan
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If you are racing the Toronto Women's half marathon, then you have less than 2 months to race day! How has your training changed as you have progressed through this journey of training for a half marathon?

If you have been following a properly periodized training plan, now is the time when more race-specific speed work is introduced into your schedule. It's important, though, to introduce speed work in a safe but effective fashion, as your run volume is also increasing and thus you must be extra-cognizant of the total amount of physical stress placed on your body. Ideally, you have been gradually increasing your total run volume, as well as your long run volume, by 10-15% per week, while also observing planned recovery periods. Your focus up to now should have been on run specific strength; including both strength in the gym but also strength on the roads. This includes hill workouts and tempo runs, meant to increase your strength-endurance. This type of training also prepares your body for the increased stress of speed work, which you will introduce now. Speed work should now be introduced and maintained at once per week for most runners, with a good day of active recovery to follow.

Speed work starts with larger intervals, such as mile or kilometer repeats, and progresses to shorter and faster intervals as you get closer to race day. For example, you may start with 3 x 1 mile at slightly faster than your goal race pace, with 2 to 3 minutes recovery jogging after each one. Gradually increase the volume up to 5-6 x 1 mile with a similar recovery period. As the weeks go by and you get closer to race week, a sample speed workout might be 8-10 x 400m with 90 seconds to 2 minutes recovery. These should be done at a pace that is significantly faster than your goal race pace, but at a speed you can maintain for all 8 to 10 intervals. Obviously, there are many ways to design speed workouts, the most important thing is that they are progressed properly throughout the weeks leading up to your race, to ensure that you are following the 10-15% rule for progression of all three training variables: frequency, intensity and volume.

For more information about coaching programs and training schedules for this race or other race goals, contact Cindy at cindy@absoluteendurance.com