

# COUCH TO 5K

NEED A LITTLE MOTIVATION TO MOVE? SIGN UP FOR A 5K (A 3.1-MILE RACE) AND LET THIS BEGINNER'S STEP-BY-STEP PLAN GUIDE YOU TO SUCCESS.

BY KAREN ASP

**S**tarting—and sticking with—an exercise habit is no easy task. Yet setting a doable goal is one of the most effective ways to bid farewell to your couch and get the activity your body needs.

Although you could choose from an infinite number of goals, consider signing up for a 5K run. It's a manageable distance to tackle, and training doesn't take much time, says Chris Heuisler, Westin Hotel's national running concierge and running coach in Belmont, Massachusetts. Plus, you'll have an easy time finding a 5K near your home.

Jump right into this beginner's eight-week plan designed by Heuisler, including weekly focus tips and strategies to ensure your success. Who knows? This 5K could be the fitness wake-up call your body has been waiting for. ➔

## 5 KEYS TO SUCCESS

Put these tips in your toolbox to make your training even more effective:

**1. Recruit a support team.** Going it alone can be tough, which is why running groups are more popular than ever. Even if you don't want to join a group, at least find people who can support you and help you check in with yourself. Heuisler, for instance, once recruited five friends, each of whom represented a word he wanted to apply to his marathon training, such as *humility* or *consistency*, and asked them to hold him accountable for those words. The end result? "I had five amazing coaches who were wishing the best for me," he says.

**2. Ditch the guilt.** This program is designed to jump-start your fitness program, not make you feel guilty for missing a scheduled workout. If you have to skip a day, no sweat. Rather than beating yourself up, just get back on the program. The one caveat? If you're taking time off because of pain, listen to your body, Heuisler says. If pain lingers for three or four days, it could be the sign of an injury, so see your doctor.

**3. Put yourself first.** One thing you have to accept about running: "There will always be somebody faster than you," Heuisler says. That's why it doesn't make sense to compare yourself to anybody but you. Who cares, after all, if somebody passes you while you're training or doing the 5K? Instead, think about the positive changes you're making and be proud of what you're doing.

**4. Reward yourself.** Every time you reach a goal, no matter how big or small, do something to celebrate, which will motivate you to keep going. Think about nonfood-related activities and create a list of possible rewards, such as getting a pedicure or buying new music. While you should definitely reward yourself after the 5K, pick little milestones along the way—finishing the first week of training, for instance—and acknowledge your accomplishment.

**5. Make FUN your finishing goal.** Some runners get caught up in running times, but it's crossing the finish line—no matter your time—that counts. So make a point to enjoy the journey. Take in the sights and scenery as you're doing the 5K, and then celebrate your success at the post-race festivities.



# YOUR COUCH-TO-5K TRAINING PLAN

stay motivated by setting a new goal each week

fitness

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	THIS WEEK, FOCUS ON:
WEEK 1	20-min walk	Off	5-min walk; 3-min jog 2x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	25-min brisk walk	Off	20-min brisk walk (jog when able)	<p><b>Staying hydrated.</b> “Studies show that more than half of all athletes tested start in a dehydrated state,” says Marie Spano, RD, an Atlanta-based sports dietitian. This can make your heart work harder and, ultimately, hamper your workouts. If you’re well hydrated, you should have to urinate every few hours, producing a sufficient quantity each time.</p> <p><b>Try: DrinkMaple Pure Maple Water.</b> This slightly sweet, refreshing water is tapped directly from maple trees and is a low-calorie treat when plain water just doesn’t cut it.</p> 
WEEK 2	Off	5-min walk; 2-min jog 3x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	25-min brisk walk	Off	30-min walk (jog when able)	10-min walk; 4-min jog; 5-min walk	<p><b>Eating anti-inflammatory foods.</b> “Foods like cherries and raspberries contain plant-based compounds that help decrease inflammation and muscle soreness,” Spano says. Heuisler is also a big fan of these foods. In fact, he hasn’t taken Advil or anything like it in years for aches and pains. Instead, he adds dark cherries and blueberries—plus a teaspoon each of freshly shaved turmeric and ginger, both of which are anti-inflammatory—to his smoothies every day.</p> <p><b>Try: Orgain Organic Superfoods.</b> Blend a scoop of this USDA Organic medley of 50 fruits and veggies into smoothies to get the benefits of wheat grass, quinoa sprouts, broccoli, ginger, tart cherry and more.</p> 
WEEK 3	Off	30-min brisk walk	Off	5-min walk; 3-min jog 3x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	25-min brisk walk (jog when able)	10-min walk; 5-min jog; 5-min walk	<p><b>Cutting (or skipping) cocktails.</b> Alcohol can dehydrate you and interfere with muscle growth and repair, Spano says. It can also mess up your sleep, which can make it tough to exercise the next day.</p> <p><b>Try: Health-Ade Kombucha California Grape.</b> Pop a bottle of bubbly—bubbly tea, that is. This low-sugar kombucha is non-alcoholic, but special enough that you won’t feel left out at parties.</p> 
WEEK 4	Off	30-min brisk walk	Off	4-min walk; 4-min jog 3x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	30-min brisk walk (jog when able)	Off	<p><b>Logging no less than seven hours of sleep each night.</b> “Sleep is the best time to allow your muscles to recover,” says Heuisler, who shoots for eight hours a night.</p> <p><b>Try: NeuroScience Kavince Ultra PM.</b> There are a lot of sleep supplements out there, and what works for one person might not work for you. If you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, this three-ingredient formulation—containing GABA, 5-HTP and melatonin—just might do the sheep-counting trick for you.</p> 
WEEK 5	10-min walk; 6-min jog; 5-min walk	Off	3-min walk; 4-min jog 4x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	30-min brisk walk (jog when able)	Off	10-min walk; 7-min jog; 5-min walk	<p><b>Noshing at least two colors at every meal.</b> Fruits and veggies aren’t good only for your waistline; they can also protect against free radicals produced by your body and the environment. “Although free radicals are essential for health and muscle functioning, they can damage cell structures when left to run amok,” Spano says. Studies show that exercise increases production of free radicals, which is why active people need to make sure they’re getting enough produce. Along with eating at least two colors at meals, make sure fruits and veggies occupy at least half your plate.</p> <p><b>Try: Tommy’s Superfoods Seasoned Brussels Sprouts.</b> Whip up an easy, tasty side dish with this heat-and-eat blend of garlicky green onions, Brussels sprouts, red bell peppers and mushrooms.</p> 
WEEK 6	Off	30-min brisk walk (jog when able)	Off	3-min walk; 4-min jog 3x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	35- to 40-min walk (jog when able)	Off	<p><b>Powering up with protein.</b> “Protein helps repair and rebuild muscle tissue,” Spano says. After a rough workout, aim for at least 20 grams of high-quality protein. Choose a protein supplement, or if your next meal is around the corner, add more protein to it.</p> <p><b>Try: Genceutic Naturals Plant Head Protein.</b> While whey protein has long been the go-to protein source for athletes, plant proteins are in the race today. This soy-free, dairy-free blend contains a protein matrix made from peas, whole-grain brown rice, algae, hemp and cranberry.</p> 
WEEK 7	10-min walk; 8-min jog; 5-min walk	Off	30-min brisk walk (jog when able)	Off	3-min walk; 6-min jog 3x (walk 1 min between sets); 5-min walk	Off	10-min walk; 10-min jog; 5-min walk	<p><b>Consuming enough carbohydrates.</b> As your workouts get longer, carbs will give your body the fuel it needs, Spano says. Check <a href="http://choosemyplate.gov">choosemyplate.gov</a> for your daily requirements, but as an example, people on a 2,000-calorie diet should be eating six ounces of whole grains daily. One ounce is about a slice of bread, half a cup of rice or one cup of ready-to-eat cereal.</p> <p><b>Try: Nature’s Path Qi’a Gluten-Free Oatmeal Creamy Coconut.</b> Enjoy 160 calories of USDA Organic goodness, thanks to rolled oats, dried coconut, buckwheat groats, inulin fiber and chia. The best part: Each filling serving contains only 1 gram of sugars.</p> 
WEEK 8	Off	10-min walk; 12-min jog; 5-min walk	Off	10-min walk; 5-min jog; 10-min walk	Off or 10- to 20-min brisk walk	<b>YOUR 5K!</b>	Off (but keep celebrating!)	<p><b>Calming your jitters.</b> No doubt you’re starting to feel race-day butterflies, which is why Spano recommends practicing mindful meditation to alleviate anxiety. When you’re feeling anxious, do several rounds of breathing, inhaling through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth. At the same time, visualize yourself successfully completing the race.</p> <p><b>Try: Source Naturals Serene Science L-Theanine.</b> L-theanine is the amino acid found in green tea that helps you relax. It’s a good choice for those times when you want to calm jitters without getting tired. 🧘</p> 