



KNOWLEDGE CENTRE | GUIDE 02

Marathon Race-Day Skin Preparation

A practical timeline for protecting known friction points before, during and after 26.2 miles.

NOTHING NEW ON RACE DAY

Your long runs are the rehearsal. Clothing, footwear, socks, underwear, support garments and skin-care products should all have been tested together before marathon morning.

IN THIS GUIDE

Training rehearsals • The final 48 hours • Race-morning preparation • Mid-race warning signs • Post-race skin care

Free, ungated practical guidance from SLIPSTREAM®

Stay Comfortable.

The marathon starts in training

Race-day skin preparation is not a single application on the morning. It is a process of learning where your body, clothing and kit create friction as distance, sweat and time accumulate.

Use long runs as full rehearsals

✓	Wear the exact shorts, tights, top, bra or support garments you plan to race in.
✓	Test your chosen socks and shoes over a genuinely long session, not only around the house.
✓	Apply your intended anti-chafe product to the same areas and in the same way planned for race morning.
✓	Carry gels, phone, belt, hydration vest and race number as intended; every added item can alter movement and contact.
✓	Run in wet, warm or layered conditions when safely possible, because moisture changes how fabric behaves.
✓	Record where you first notice warmth, tingling, rubbing, pinching or fabric movement.

Build your personal friction map

Typical area	What to check
Inner thighs / groin	Stride contact, shorts length, seams and sweat
Underarms / side torso	Vest edges, arm swing, hydration straps
Nipples / bra line	Fabric movement, seams and dampness
Waist / lower back	Belts, pockets, number fastenings and drawcords
Feet / toes / heels	Shoe fit, sock creases, moisture and debris

The final 48 hours

The objective is calm consistency. Avoid last-minute changes that introduce unfamiliar pressure points, rough edges or skin reactions.

Two days before

- Check the forecast, but prepare flexible layers for British weather.
- Lay out every item in order, including race number fixings, belt and throwaway start-line layer.
- Inspect seams, labels, hook-and-loop fastenings and worn fabric edges.
- Check toenails are comfortable; avoid aggressive last-minute foot treatments or removing protective hard skin.
- Do not trial a new cream, tape, detergent, deodorant or hair-removal method.

The evening before

- Shower normally and dry gently, especially in skin folds and between the toes.
- Check that skin is intact. Do not apply cosmetic anti-chafe cream to open, bleeding or infected-looking areas.
- Pack a small, familiar contingency kit in your bag or running belt if you have rehearsed carrying it.
- Set out dry race clothing away from drinks, open windows and bathroom moisture.

AVOID LAST-MINUTE HAIR REMOVAL

Shaving or waxing can leave the skin surface more sensitive. If hair removal is part of your normal routine, establish its timing during training rather than experimenting immediately before the race.

Your compact kit

Tested anti-chafe product • soft tissue • spare dry socks if practical • familiar blister dressings • a small plastic bag for wet items

Race morning: apply with purpose

Give yourself enough time to prepare in good light. A rushed application can miss the exact edges where fabric moves.

✓	Begin with clean, dry, intact skin.
✓	Dress partly, then check where garment edges and seams actually sit when you move.
✓	Apply your already-tested anti-chafe product to known hot spots exactly as directed.
✓	For SLIPSTREAM ENDURANCE™, use small, controlled amounts and work the cream in until clear. Do not slather it on.
✓	Wash or wipe excess product from your hands before touching glasses, phone screens or food.
✓	Put on socks without wrinkles and check the heel and toe fabric is seated consistently.
✓	Attach the race number and fully load belts or vests, then walk, jog and swing your arms for a final contact-point check.

Think beyond the obvious areas

Check under bra bands, heart-rate straps, phone armbands, waist belts, hydration-vest edges and any costume or charity clothing. A harmless edge at mile one may become a persistent friction point later.

RAIN CHANGES FABRIC

Wet garments may cling, stretch or move differently. Avoid adding an untested waterproof layer or plastic barrier against the skin. Use only combinations you have already rehearsed.

During the race: act at the first warning

A marathon rewards early decisions. Heat, tingling, stinging or a repeated tug from one seam is useful information, not something to ignore until the finish.

If a hot spot develops

- Move safely to the side before inspecting or adjusting anything.
- Identify the cause: wet fabric, a folded seam, grit, a loose strap or repeated skin-to-skin contact.
- Pat away moisture or debris gently; do not scrub already-sensitive skin.
- Reposition the garment or equipment.
- Reapply a familiar product only if its instructions allow and you have practised doing so.
- If skin is breaking, pain is increasing or your movement is changing, seek help at an event medical point.

Feet and blisters

Do not deliberately burst a blister during the race. NHS advice is to keep blisters clean, protect them with a soft plaster or padded dressing, and avoid the footwear or equipment that caused them while they heal. If a foot problem is affecting your gait, continuing may create another injury.

Know when the problem is bigger than skin

Stop and seek event medical help for severe pain, extensive broken skin, bleeding that will not stop, signs of heat illness, dizziness, confusion, chest pain or any symptom that concerns you. Race goals never take priority over your safety.

THE EARLY-ACTION RULE

Ten seconds spent smoothing a sock, adjusting a strap or addressing a hot spot can prevent miles of worsening friction.

After the finish: gentle recovery

Sweat cools quickly after you stop. Change out of wet clothing as soon as practical and treat rubbed areas gently, even when they look minor.

✓	Rinse with lukewarm water; avoid aggressive scrubbing.
✓	Pat the skin dry with a soft, clean towel.
✓	Choose loose, soft clothing that does not repeat the same contact.
✓	For an intact blister, protect it rather than bursting it. Ask a pharmacist about a suitable dressing.
✓	Reapply SLIPSTREAM ENDURANCE™, or use a familiar moisturiser on dry, intact skin if appropriate; stop if it stings or increases redness.
✓	Allow irritated skin to settle before returning to clothing or activity that repeats the rubbing.

Seek healthcare advice

Contact NHS 111, a pharmacist or your GP if pain is severe or worsening, redness is spreading, a blister is hot or contains green or yellow pus, there is discharge, or you feel generally unwell.

Trusted resources

- [England Athletics / RunTogether - running and chafing guidance](#)
- [NHS - blister care and warning signs](#)
- [Leeds Community Healthcare NHS - friction-blister prevention](#)

THE MARATHON SKIN PLAN

Rehearse everything. Map your hot spots. Prepare dry, intact skin. Apply familiar protection carefully. Respond early. Recover gently.

SLIPSTREAM® KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Practical guidance for active living - education first, products second.

Stay Comfortable.

Prepared August 2026. SLIPSTREAM products are cosmetic products, not medicines, and are not intended to diagnose, treat or cure a medical condition. This guide does not replace advice from event medical staff, a pharmacist, GP or other qualified healthcare professional.