

Mumbai's bravehearts all set for tomorrow's marathon

Around 90 rehabilitated cardiac patients are participating in the run this year



Training for the marathon in progress

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They are one enthusiastic and hearty (no pun intended) bunch — Mumbai's heart patients who are all set to run the marathon tomorrow. Practicing with dedication since several months under the supervision and care of cardiologists and physiologists, these patients, in the age group of 20 to 70, are in their fittest best. We caught up with a few of them during one of their practice sessions last week and came away motivated.

'DON'T BE SCARED TO RUN IF YOU'VE HAD A BYPASS'

Running marathons has now become a part of life for 73-year-old Surendra Dasadi. The asthmatic septuagenarian first began running in 2012 with the dream run. A little later, he followed it up with a half marathon and since then, there was no looking back. "I have completed 30 marathons — around 15 half marathons and 15 ten-kms." This fit old man could give many a young man and woman a run for their money, quite literally. He states with conviction that only a marathoner can sport, "Whoever has got a bypass surgery must run marathons — if not 21-km, at least 10 km, so that they can keep themselves healthy, fit and fine. Don't be scared just because you have had a bypass."

'I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A HEART PATIENT ANYMORE'

Engineer Swapnil Walimbe, 45, had a surgery in 2017 and has been exercising meticulously since. His multiple surgeries have not restricted him from following his passion for outdoor activities like running marathons and mountaineering. "I don't consider myself a heart patient anymore. In fact, I walk 6 kms every day, do stretches and follow a controlled diet with less salt, sugar and oil," he says, adding that he is looking forward to the dream run tomorrow.

Among the younger patients, Eric Mascarenhas, 23, was operated for



congenital heart disease in September 2016 and has been working with the cardiac rehab since. Exercising regularly, he will be participating in the dream run yet again, this year.

'GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A SECOND CHANCE AND YOU MUST UTILISE IT'

Data analyst Rajnish Rathore, 46, had a heart attack in 2008 and underwent angioplasty. He does have ectopics (irregular rhythm) intermittently, but he still runs many half marathons in the city, albeit with proper care and guidance of the cardiologists. "The doctors at the cardiac rehabilitation unit trained me well. They worked at balancing my heart rate and intensity and continued to motivate me to take baby steps towards my first half marathon," he says.

In the last nine years, Rajnish has run 36 marathons including dream run in 2010, 17 marathons of 10 kms, 18 half marathons. "I don't feel sad about cardiac issues anymore," he says. In fact, his advice to other cardiac patients is: "God has given you a second chance and you must utilise it and keep practising. Don't be scared. Don't get up early morning thinking you are a heart patient and begin to worry. Just keep pushing yourself and touch your peak and make sure to maintain it. It is also important that you are in consultation with your doctors constantly."



THE NUMBER OF REHABILITATED CARDIAC PATIENTS' PARTICIPATION HAS GONE UP CONSIDERABLY

Around 60 rehabilitated cardiac patients participated in the run last year; however, this time there has been sharp spike. This year's marathon will see around 90 rehabilitated cardiac patients taking part in the run. And cardiologists feel that this noticeable increase in participation is partially due to an increase in health awareness and the information boom. "Constant motivation and awareness about the marathon for the cardiac patients have played a major role," says Dr Vijay D'Silva, the director of medical affairs and critical care at a heart institute.

Senior cardiologist, Dr Santosh Kumar Dora, who is closely associated with the patients and a fitness enthusiast himself, adds, "Motivation is the main factor. Success stories of other patients has led to this rise."

'NO CARDIAC PATIENT HAS EVER REQUIRED MEDICAL ATTENTION POST RUN TILL DATE'

Every year, cardiac patients have participated in the run, and none till now required any kind of medical attention during or post the marathon. Dr D'Silva says, "It's been a record. This itself speaks a lot. One can constantly beat limitations. This is what we tell all our patients too."

FACTORS PATIENTS NEED TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN RUNNING TOMORROW

Once the underlying heart problem is corrected, the patient is as good as any other normal person say doctors. Dr Dora says, "After recovery, a dedicated training session, regular practice and good healthy diet to keep them fit prepares them to be a marathoner. However, like any other person, they need to be keep certain things in mind while running.

- ◆ Listen to body. If you have chest pain, unusual significant breathlessness, giddiness or palpitation then stop running and seek medical help.
- ◆ Keep yourself hydrated. When you are running long distances, drink at regular intervals to keep yourself hydrated.
- ◆ Run at a speed, you are used to while practicing. Running at a higher speed may cause harm to your heart.

WHAT GOES INTO THE TRAINING OF THE CARDIAC PATIENTS



The training schedules for dream run and half marathon are different and one chooses accordingly. Dr D'Silva shares that initially for every cardiac patient, it is advised to start with the dream run and then later for the half marathon. He says, "Every patient who wishes to run the marathon has to clear the medical tests before they start the training. Individuals, who plan to run long distance like half or full marathon, need to have a complete cardiac screening, which includes ECG, STRESS TEST, STRESS ECHO etc. They are closely monitored in terms of various parameters like heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen saturation and any ischemic changes during the training period by our experienced physiotherapists."

Physiotherapist Dr Nirali Vyas says that normal training begins with the warm-up, which helps to increase movement of blood through the tissues and making the muscles more pliable. It is then

followed by stretching of the muscles, which helps in preventing any sports injury.

Physiotherapist Dr Anuja Mhatre adds, "Running is second phase, which is followed by the cool-down phase; the latter helps in the gradual recovery of pre-exercise heart rate and blood pressure. It helps in preventing blood pooling, returning the blood back to the heart rather than allowing it to pool in the muscles that have been worked."

Training for the full marathon needs more endurance training as compared to the one in half marathon. The training for the marathon is conducted by an experienced therapist along with the patients. "Group exercises and a run in the ground helps in boosting the confidence of just not the individual, but the whole group too. The enthusiasm every patient has while running the marathon is a treat to watch," signs off Dr D'Silva.