

Racing for Life



This year over three quarters of a million women will take to the streets en masse, all in the name of charity. **Jessica Cross** dons her trainers and joins them to find out more.

For the last few months I've been running up to five kilometres every week. It's not because I feel the need to make myself suffer, or that I feel pressurised by the media to slim down. The reason for my aching legs and sore feet is that I'm in training to compete in this year's 'Race for Life' and I'm not alone. Since the first race began in 1994 over 3 million women have competed in the annual event, raising over £200 million in sponsorship money. So just what is it that entices so many women to don their running shoes and sweat out the 5K race distance?

Well for one thing the race is for charity and all the money raised goes directly to Cancer Research UK. Particularly, research into the three most common cancers: breast, lung and bowel. In today's society most of us have been affected by cancer in some way, whether it's through a family member, friend or even a personal experience. The race is an opportunity for everyone to raise funds towards saving and prolonging the lives of cancer sufferers, which is why over 750,000

entrants took part in last year's race.

The event is also a great excuse to try your hand at running and reaping the multiple health benefits it has to offer. Reebok even offer advice on training for the race on the Race for Life website, including 3 unique training programmes geared towards competing. Apart from the obvious positive effects running can have on your mental and physical health, Cancer Research believes that just 30 minutes of moderate cardio vascular exercise 5 days a week can greatly reduce your risk of developing cancer. "While inactivity can increase cancer risk, regular physical activity protects against some cancers. Regular exercise also helps to keep body weight at a healthy level, and being overweight or obese can greatly increase the risk of cancer. But the exercise itself also has a protective effect, which is independent of its effects on bodyweight." Spokesperson, Cancer Research UK.

Running is also beneficial to your wallet because it's free and requires no specialist equipment and it has the added benefit of being the

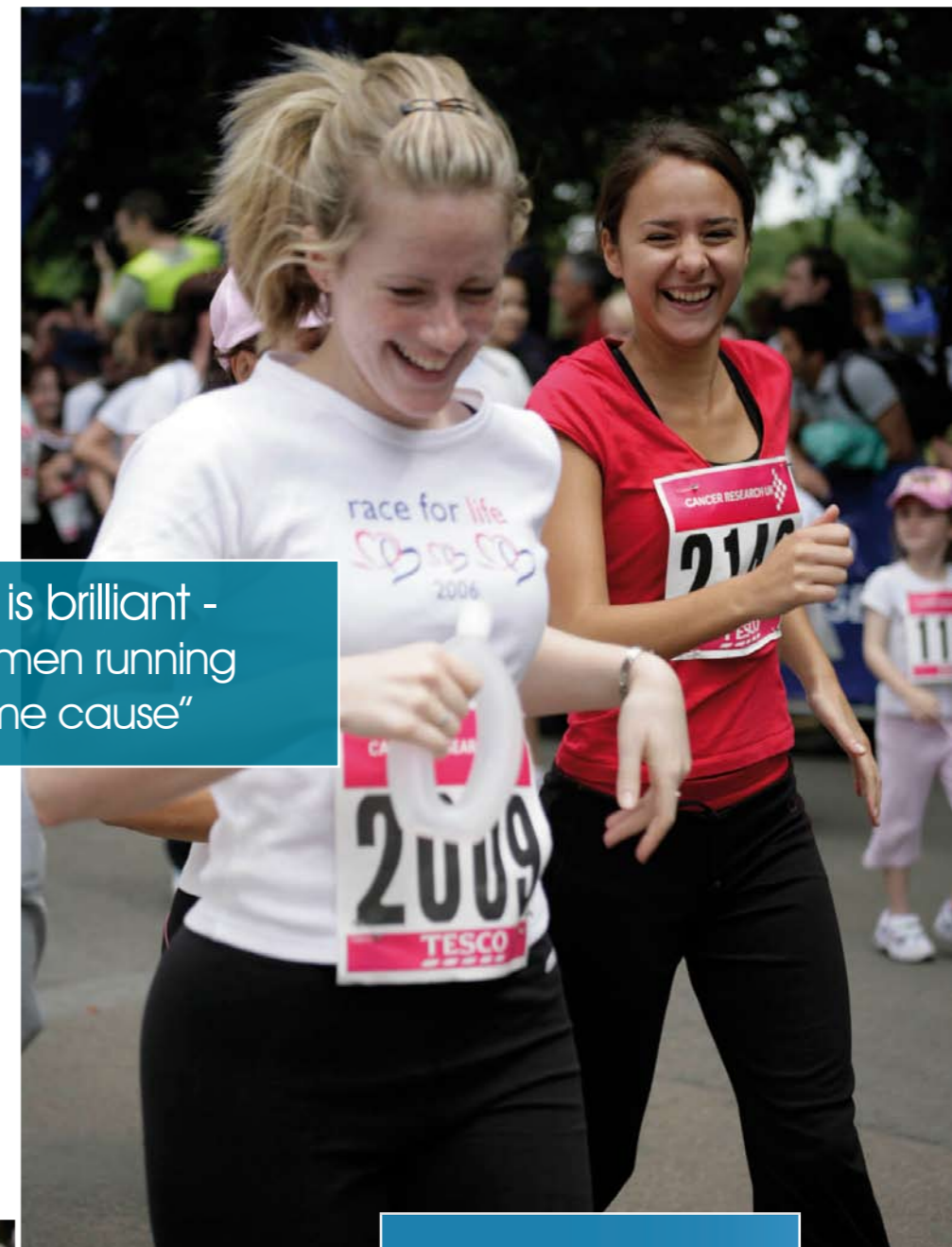
perfect exercise to fit around a busy lifestyle, so you don't have to ditch your social engagements in order to maintain your training. "Running is a very simple and effective activity. It requires no pitch or court, no special skills and a bare minimum of equipment. You can do it whenever and wherever you like and for as long or short a time period as you have available." Steven Seaton, Editor of Runner's World (guide to running).

But if the very thought of running for 5 kilometres brings you out in a sweat, fear not, because the race caters to all levels of fitness, so you don't have to hire a personal trainer and undertake an Olympic training regime in order to compete. You can complete the race distance running, jogging or even walking whilst having a friendly chat with other competitors. "Last year was my first race and I was terrified that I'd never last the distance, but everybody around me was so supportive and spurred me on. It doesn't matter if you run, jog or walk the race because it's all about taking part and raising money for cancer research. I'm taking part again this year and I can't wait." Hannah Davis, 'Race for Life' competitor.

The other great thing about this race is that, as it's the UK's biggest women event, you don't have to worry about being shown up by your other half's macho desire to prove he is the world's best athlete! The emphasis is all about women coming together to raise money to fight cancer and because of this, the atmosphere at the event is very different to other more competitive charity races. "The atmosphere is brilliant - there are lots of women running together for the same cause. We're all touched by cancer so it is imperative everyone does their bit." Antonia Okonma, Actress and 'Race for Life' competitor.

"The atmosphere is brilliant - there are lots of women running together for the same cause"

If all this is still not enough to tempt you, Race for Life's official sponsors Nivea and Tesco have teamed up to ensure that every competitor - whether they finish first or last - goes home with a nice goody bag, as a thank you for taking part. So if you're looking for a novel way of shaping up for the summer with the added bonus of raising money for a good cause, why not join in one of the 260 different races around the UK from 3rd May to end of July 2008. You'll be in great company!



i Cancer Research UK offers a whole range of fundraising races, ranging from the 5Km woman's only event all the way up to mixed gender Marathons. You can find out more information about these races and how to join in on the official website: www.raceforlife.org or call: 0871 641 2282