

Here is our **Top 10 list of Tips and Insights** (in no particular order) for those of you who are new to the climb or who need a refresher. Thank you to Ian McLeod and Team Canadian Naturals for preparing the list for us.

1) You will get very, very hot during the climb so be mindful of the clothing you have on underneath your gear. Do not try to remove or modify the liners in your bunker gear. Just don't do it. Heat buildup in the stairwells is a challenge every year. It will be uncomfortable and you will sweat... A LOT- especially if it's a sunny morning. Hydrate accordingly before the event.

2) UnderArmour style garments and other types of compression clothing do provide a nice, slippery surface to minimize friction between your pant liners and your legs. This really helps since your liners / pants will work against you with every step you make. Any "slippery" garment will work on your legs. For your upper body remember some UA gear is really light fabric while other stuff doesn't breathe very well and is a little heavier. Choose the lightest fabric you can and think more about dissipating heat. We can climb with our collars and even jacket fronts cracked.

3) 1 step or 2 step or both intermittently?: In my experience for all but the top level cardio monsters a steady single step pace is the most efficient way to get to the top. Switching between single and double step- especially for your first time- isn't recommended since it can result in an unpredictable depletion of energy and lactic acid buildup. Remember: Unlike an event where you're on air and the air cylinder gets lighter with every breath, this is not an on-air event so that cylinder will stay the same weight throughout the climb. Average to slightly above average fitness folks could double step about 30 stories before tapping out but that's barely half the climb and the subsequent single stepping becomes very slow. Conserve your energy with a safe and steady single step pace and if you have anything left in the last 10 floors open it up!

4) Music: Leave the faster paced music to the end. Start with medium paced tunes that aren't going to encourage you to speed your step up too early. Kickstart My Heart by Motley Crew will help you shred the first 15 floors but the next 40 will be an ordeal. Have a playlist that gives you about 25 minutes of steady beats (need some in the start line too!) to help give you something to focus on as you "climb the stairs to despair."

5) Water bottles and extras: Proper hydration before the event is essential but the couple times we've tried to bring some water in the stairs "for comfort" we've never drank it. People who are doing the climb to participate casually are welcome to bring whatever they'd like- however those who are challenging themselves for time could safely leave the water behind. If you DO decide to bring a bottle do not put it in your leg pouches since it will interfere with your steps. Your chest radio pocket is the safest bet for a small water bottle. As for the extra gear- Leave it behind. Lights, entry tools, extrication devices, webbing, wedges, gloves, notepads...

6) Handrail spacing: As you can see in some of the videos the handrails are pretty close together- slightly wider than you would see on a step mill. Consider the "alternating" hand over hand or "steam engine" simultaneous pull techniques. Remember if you use a simultaneous technique to switch up which leg you "pull" on so that you don't exhaust one side.

7) Passing and being passed: This event is full of firefighters who are participating to throw up tears and cry lactic acid for no other reason than to raise money for a good cause... these are very, very good people who are considerate by nature. The staircase is open concept and you can see people above and below you for a couple of floors. You will know someone is behind you, and people in front of you will know that you are there no matter how loud the music is in the headphones. People will step aside for you at the landings as you should step aside for them.

8) What's at the top?: A very enthusiastic crowd of volunteers and supporters will greet you and help take your pack off so it can be sent back down for upcoming participants. You will be provided an escort to help you down a small flight of stairs into the meeting area where we have about 10-15 minutes to enjoy some rehab of water / fruit and a couple of photo ops with the team. They have a steady stream of climbers coming in so they do tend to politely shoo you along to keep the area in a manageable state. You can only stuff so many firefighters in a space before things start to get broken and all the food disappears. Freshen up, enjoy the view for a few minutes, snap a photo with the team and head to the elevator for the glorious and effortless ride to the ground.

9) Slow or stop: Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. If you're pushing yourself for time then remember: A brief stop will "feel" better but physiologically you aren't gaining sufficient benefit from the interlude to make up the time lost. You'll ruin your pace and once you've taken one "taking just one more break... and another... and another" will be much more tempting. These breaks, however brief, don't help and can easily add minutes to your time. You don't want to be left feeling humdrum about your time for a year until the next event!

Please note we're not talking about "chest pain" and other medical conditions! If the only issue you're working against is worrying your legs will melt off then focus on good, deep breathing to get that lactic acid out and keep those wheels turning!

10) What to expect for the start line?: People will be called up about 15 minutes before they're due to enter the tower and this is a good time to squeeze in a last bathroom break. Pay attention to the groups ahead of you and time that last visit to the blue rocket accordingly. There will be a group in the tower already climbing, one lined up to go in and one getting packs on. There are generally 3 basic phases to the climb before the steps: Notification / Muster and Pack up / Line Up.