



RUNNING INJURIES

Running is a great form of exercise, recreation, and sport participation for adults, adolescents, and children. Whether alone or in a team environment, running, when done properly, can enhance physical fitness, coordination, sense of accomplishment and physical and emotional development. However, running under adverse conditions or with inadequate clothing and equipment can cause a variety of injuries and physical stress.

What are the signs that I might have a running injury?

Signs that you may be injured or need to alter or stop your running include:

- Pain or discomfort while running
- Pain at rest
- Inability to sleep
- Limping
- Stiffness
- Easily experiencing shortness of breath (exercise asthma)
- Headaches during or after running
- Dizziness or lightheaded feeling any time

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What are some common running injuries?

Running injuries in kids are relatively common and may include:

- **Knee injuries**—kneecap pain, tendonitis
- **Lower leg pain**—shin splints, stress fractures, calf problems
- **Foot and ankle injuries**—ankle sprain, heel pain, plantar fasciitis (bottom of foot pain), toe injuries
- **Pelvic and hip injuries**—muscle pulls, growth plate stress injuries, tendonitis, groin pain, buttock pain
- **Heat injuries**—sunburn, dehydration, heat exhaustion, stroke
- **Skin injuries**—blisters or heat rash

Why is it important to stop running if I'm hurt?

Pushing through pain just makes the problem worse, which will keep you from running for a long time. Stopping when there is a problem and correcting it gets you back running again in the shortest, safest amount of time. Whenever there is a problem, contact your doctor immediately for proper diagnosis and treatment. Most of the time, problems are easily fixed if attended to quickly.

How can I prevent running injuries?

Planning Goals

- Talk about running with a coach, athletic trainer, knowledgeable adult runner, or running organization.
- Children and parents should consistently discuss the goals of the running program.
- Determine the reason (goal) you are running (e.g., fitness, recreation, training, competition).
- Develop a running plan and strategy that is compatible with your goal and your current level of fitness.
- Set safe, achievable goals and advance slowly and cautiously.

Preparing to Run

- Hydrate (drink water) well in advance.
- Stretch for five minutes before beginning.
- Speed up slowly.

Proper Running Attire

The local running store is a good place to start and ask questions. It's important to remember the following:

- Lightweight, breathable clothing prevents perspiration buildup and allows for better body heat regulation.
- Running hats, head covers, and ear covers shield the sun but allow temperature regulation. They are also excellent for cold weather to avoid frostbite.
- Proper fitting and proper thickness of socks help avoid blisters and irritation.
- Proper shoes with good support arches should fit well and be comfortable.
- Inspect your shoes before running. If they have worn thin or are angled, purchase new shoes.
- Orthotic shoe inserts (commercial off-the-shelf or custom-made) are especially valuable for people with flat feet, high-arched feet, unstable ankles, or foot problems.

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Safe Locations and Times to Run

- Flat ground is more gentle on the body than hills.
- Avoid steep hills.
- All-purpose track surfaces (high school track) are ideal—especially for beginners.
- Stay in well-lit areas (e.g., schools, public streets).
- Always run with a partner (preferably a teen or parent).
- A parent should always know:
 - where you are running
 - when you are running
 - how far you are running
 - with whom you are running
 - when you expect to be back
 - when you are finished
- Use a bag to carry a cell phone with you.
- Avoid using headphones, especially if you are running on the street, so you can hear traffic and warning sounds.

Safe Weather Conditions

Children and adolescents cannot tolerate the weather extremes that adults can, making them more susceptible to heat and cold injuries. Prevent heat illnesses (e.g., sunburn, dehydration, exhaustion) or cold injuries (frostbite) by monitoring the weather conditions.

Avoid running if:

- Temperatures are over 90 degrees
- Humidity levels are high
- Temperatures are cold or freezing

Expert Consultant

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