

A Beginner's Guide to Running For Fitness & Fun!



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Introduction

You have the wind in your hair and the warmth of the sun on your face. As you pick 'em up and put 'em down, the rest of the world seems to fly right by. We are talking about the experience of running.

Running is as old as the world itself; a means of survival and transportation in the beginning. Later in our human evolution, running became a sport. In modern times, running is most often thought of as a fitness program rather than a means of survival or transportation.

Starting a running program takes some effort. If you just throw on a pair of shoes you've had in your closet collecting dust for years and head down the road, the injuries you are likely to suffer could ruin your plans. Proper preparation, proper equipment, and proper training are all important to the success of your running program.

In this report, we take a look at choosing proper attire, hydration methods, and training programs. We also examine the ups and the downs of running; the physical benefits as well as the physical challenges. Talking about running would not be complete without discussing all aspects of running, good and bad, because being prepared is key to having a good running experience.

Running for sport and fitness is here to stay. Why? Because it's fun and the rewards are tremendous. If you're ready for the challenge, read on and welcome to the road!

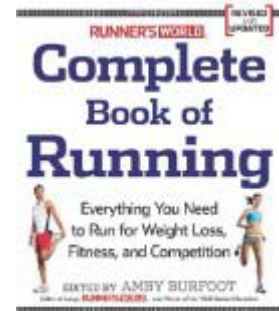
Discover the Benefits of Running - Mind and Body Working Together

The idea of running for fitness and fun usually starts with thinking about what running can do for your figure. Many people start running because they want to lose weight or get into shape. But there is a great deal more to running than just getting into your skinny jeans again. Let's take a look beyond your figure and see what else running can do for you.

Mental Benefits of Running

Participating in sports and fitness programs helps you stay young in both body and mind. Running is one of those sports where mind and body have to work together in order to become successful. We are going to start at the very top of the body - the brain - and talk about the mental benefits.

One benefit of running is that you will develop a more focused mind as you learn how to run and improve your competence and ability. Learning a new skill, any new skill, helps the thought process. Combine that with the physical benefits of running, and you'll see how running offers whole-body benefits.



[The Runner's World Complete Book of Running](#): Everything You Need to Run for Weight Loss, Fitness, and Competition – Is an excellent book to look to if you are looking to lose weight through running and want some extra beginner advice.

Along with the benefits of the learning process, the brain also needs a lot of oxygen to function while we're pushing our limits. When you perform any type of endurance exercise, like running, you increase the available oxygen in the bloodstream. More oxygen in the bloodstream means more oxygen for your brain. And the more oxygen your brain gets, the more the fog clears and you can think more clearly. Now you are functioning more efficiently.

Why is brain function important? Let's say that you're feeling stressed at work. You have multiple projects and trouble with your boss. With a clear head, it is easier to prioritize your life, seek solutions to your problems and implement those solutions. Think of the struggles you have juggling work, community, kids, dinner, homework, etc. You know a clear mind helps with the chaos, and running helps clear the mind. Oxygen feeding your brain gives you that clear focus.

Another boost to the brain you will experience while exercising is the increase in endorphins. Maybe you have heard of the "runner's high?" Even if you were in a melancholy or blue mood before you run, you could be in a spectacular mood afterward in spite of yourself. Endorphins are considered nature's depression lifter. Run and enjoy this "high" as well as a drug-free mood enhancer.

Physical Benefits of Running

Now that your mind is clear and filled with oxygen, let's move on down to the body. Running affects your body in countless positive ways. Here are some of the highlights of what running can do for your body. Running:

- Improves oxygen consumption
- Promotes cardiovascular fitness
- Increases endurance
- Helps you lose weight
- Strengthens your core muscles
- Strengthens your bones
- Strengthens your lungs
- Improves sleep habits
- Reduces risk of diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure

While you won't see these benefits right away, they will develop over time as you begin to make a habit of the sport of running.

Are you looking for an exercise that has benefits for both the body and the mind? Put one foot in front of the other and get your body moving. Before you know it, you'll be running for sport, exercise, and pleasure.

Finding Your Personal Motivation – The Heart Of Running

People can underestimate how much the mind has to do with the body's ability to do something. What is your real motivation for running and how does that motivation affect the results of your training?

Universal Motivations to Run

It seems that [weight loss](#) and getting into shape is a universal goal for the majority of people in North America. One way to lose weight and get into shape for once and for all is through a serious running program.

Running, along with walking, are exercises that you can begin fairly quickly and easily. Notice that we didn't say that weight loss would be easy to accomplish, but then nothing worthwhile ever is. But with a good pair of running shoes and [comfortable clothing](#), you are ready to begin training for a lifetime of activity that you can enjoy.

You can get up from a relatively sedentary lifestyle and learn to run... and do it well. As a matter of fact, many folks who are new to running participate in a 5K (3.2 miles) within the first few months they begin to run. For some, the possibility of crossing a finish line is the motivation they need to start running. Others just want to feel better and lose weight, but then find the camaraderie of the races fun and very motivating.

It's time to get off the couch and find your own personal motivation. The next time you go to the park, take a look at people who are running. You'll see that no matter what age, gender, shape, or size, everyone is represented out there on the running trail and each has a story to tell about why they started running, and why they keep running.

Determining Your Own Personal Motivation

Even though running is not hard to start, there has to be a reason to change from what you are doing (sitting on the couch perhaps) to something new and potentially life-changing. In other words, you have to find your heart.

Looking for your motivator may begin with common reasons like:



- Losing weight
- Getting in shape
- Improving your health

These are fine motivators, but they are not personal motivators; these are not your **“heart.”** What is going to get you moving and keep you moving are more measured and personal statements and not quite so vague. Take a look at what I hear from people I know about what they want from running:

- “I want to stop taking blood pressure medications.”
- “I want to reverse my Type 2 diabetes.”
- “I want to be around to see my grandkids grow up.”
- “I want to feel confident in myself and my body again.”
- “I want to attend my grandkid's college graduation.”
- “I want to welcome my great-grandchild into the world.”
- “I want people I love to respect me.”
- “I want to feel like I did when I was a kid.”
- “I want to be an example for my spouse.”
- “I want to be an example for my kids.”
- “I want to be an example for my grandchildren.”
- “I want to walk my daughter down the aisle.”
- “I want to see my granddaughter in my wedding gown.”
- “I want to prove something to myself.”

Now, those statements are personal! Some of these statements may even sound familiar to you. When looking for motivation, dig deep. When you have a concrete and specific reason for a change, it will propel you forward through the tough running workouts and help you reach the finish line every time. Might I add; if your personal reason to run brings a tear to your eye, even better. You've found the heart of your motivation.

The Proper Running Shoe – Let Your Feet Be Your Guide

When your foot hits the pavement or path, you want the best cushion you can get. Your primary equipment in running is your footwear. The [right pair of running shoes](#) can make all the difference between a comfortable run and potential injuries. Here are some keys to help you find the pair you need.

Respect Your Feet

Feet work hard... very hard. Your feet bear the weight of the entire body. But, no matter what your weight, you can find shoes that work with your feet to provide the support and structure you need. Protecting your feet from the very beginning is what matters when you start running.



Arches Anthology

There are three types of arches:

- normal arch
- high arch
- flat arch

When your feet are normal, they don't roll inward or outward. The foot maintains a neutral position when you are standing or walking. In the sand, you'd have a footprint that is missing the inside, the arch, and that's all.

If you have a high arch, you are generally a supinator. This means that your feet roll outward when you stand or walk. This puts pressure on the outside of your feet. Your footprint will barely show the middle section.

When the arches are basically flat, you will walk on the inside of your feet, meaning you are a pronator. The footprint you would leave in the sand would look like an oval with toes.

Choosing Shoes Based on Your Feet

Each different type of arch has [a different type of shoe that will help you run](#) more efficiently. For the normal foot, a stability shoe is better. The foot stays in that neutral position which keeps the hips and knees in line.

People with high arches need more cushioning. That space between the arch and the bottom of the shoe can be a problem causing the foot to roll outward unless there is something to support the arch, keeping it more neutral. A shoe with supporting arches rolls the feet inward towards a neutral position.

For people with a flat arch, rolling inward will affect the hips causing pain because the body is out of line. For you, there are motion control shoes which have something like a cup in the center of the shoe that forms an arch, holding the foot in place in a neutral position.

Beyond your arch type, your foot has a shape. Take into consideration the width as well as the length. The toe box as well as the heel depth and width will vary on each shoe, even within brands and styles. That is why it is so important to spend time researching and trying on shoes before choosing the pair for you.

Footwear Tips

Now that you know about arches, be sure to inspect your own footprint in the sand to determine the type of arch your foot possesses. Then consider your foot's shape, contour, and special needs. When you shop for your running shoes, follow these tips to help you get your shoe choice right the first time.

1. [Find a specialty store](#) – A store that specializes in running shoes will have associates that are knowledgeable about measuring feet and identifying arch types and special foot needs. They can offer recommendations on what shoes to try on and will help you find the right fit.
2. **Try on shoes with your running socks** – Bring the socks you will be wearing when you run (more on running socks in the chapter on choosing apparel) and put them on when you try on shoes. This will give you the real fit and will alert you to any hotspots right away.
3. **Try on shoes during time of day you will run** – Your foot swells during the day. If you run in the evening, your shoe may need to be bigger than if you run in the morning. Shop for your shoes at the time of day you will be running so your feet are in the condition they will be in at that time.
4. **Spend time trying out the shoes** – Running shoes are all about comfort. Try the shoes on and walk around the store to be sure there is enough space in the toe box and your arches fit properly. This could take up to an hour to decide. Don't walk around for ten seconds, walk around for ten minutes in every pair you consider buying. Pay attention to any discomfort. Once you've narrowed down your choice to

a few styles, ask a sales representative to point you in the direction of a clear spot to actually run. That's how you will know if your foot slides forward or your heel lifts when you hit your stride. Any good shoe store will clear a path for you and help you make your final decision.

5. **Ignore the size** - Many people make the mistake of buying a size they think they wear. Sizes really don't matter. Start at your usual size, then grab a couple sizes smaller and larger. Through the years I've bought shoes anywhere from size 6 to size 8.5 just because of the make, model, and shape. Saying "but I've always worn a 7" won't get you a shoe that fits properly. There is no regulation for sizing, so the manufacture can stick any label they want on their shoe. The size is just a guide. The fit is what's important.

6. **Structure matters** – What's the difference between walking, running, and cross training shoes? Quite a bit. Shoe manufacturers have made a science of foot movement and when you choose a shoe that fits the activity you are participating in, you are doing your feet, and yourself, a favor. If you are buying shoes for running only, stick to running shoes. When you walk, wear your walking shoes; when you play tennis, wear your tennis shoes. Your feet, back, legs, and knees will thank you.

Without the proper equipment, injuries are more likely to occur. Choose your running shoes carefully. Consider your shoes the first expense and everything else secondary. More beginning runners stop running because of poorly fitting shoes than any other

reason. Spend time and money on your shoes first and you won't regret it.



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When you do decide to find the right shoe [I recommend Zappos!](#) They offer a huge array of fitness shoes at great prices. They everything from men's running shoes, women running shoes with variety for hiking, trailing, and even track and field. I highly recommend them for their competitive prices.

The Proper Running Attire – It's More Than Fashion

Is the old adage true that all you need to enjoy a run is the air in your lungs and the rhythm of the road? Well, yes, sort of. But, when you run any distance at all, you'll be much more comfortable and more likely to avoid injury if you are properly outfitted. If you are wearing the wrong attire when you set off down the road, it can mean a lot of pain at the end of that otherwise perfect run. There is a little bit of an art to choosing something to wear.

What's on Your Bottom

Can you imagine running in jeans? Probably not. Let's take a look at more sensible apparel:

1. **Shorts** that are comfortable and made of breathable fabric are normally a good choice. Some runners prefer not to have fabric moving with the breeze so they choose snugger fitting styles. A certain amount of spandex will help keep your shorts from riding up as you run. Looser fitting shorts are fine as long as they are light and made out of material that is specifically for sports to reduce the chaffing problem.
2. **Capri** or below-the-knee pants made for exercise are also good for runners who aren't comfortable wearing shorts or who want more coverage in the cooler months. Remember to choose a fabric that will prevent chafing and bunching between the legs.
3. **Running skirts** have become very popular as they are fun, fashionable, and very comfortable. Many women like the look which eliminates the bunching and visible butt outline. Keeping one's derriere discreetly covered is one reason running skirts have become a good choice for many women.



What's on Your Top

You would think you could run in any old t-shirt, right? Think again. Here are a few suggestions that will feel a lot better:

1. Consider wearing a tighter fitting shirt in order to avoid chafing under arms and around the neck caused by moving fabric. Choose a fabric that wicks moisture, in both cold and warm weather running. Layer a fitted windbreaker on top when the

weather gets cold, but always choose fabric that is made to wick moisture.

2. In hot weather, many runners choose skin-tight tank tops that are specially made to wick moisture and keep them cool. When the fabric fits tightly, it doesn't move around; and a fabric that stays put doesn't rub and cause chaffing.

3. Okay, you say you're not confident enough to choose such tight clothing. There are very light weight fitted t-shirt styles that are very cool and figure friendly even at larger sizes. Choose a running top that is made out of moisture wicking fabric at a size and style that is more comfortable for your size. Just please, do not wear some old cotton t-shirt. You will suffer from pretty serious chafing from that cotton fabric as cotton is notorious for getting damp and staying damp. Cotton, and cotton blends, are not friendly fabrics when it comes to running clothes.

Let's Talk Socks

Socks seem like such an incidental thing, until you start running. Feet sweat in shoes and when they sweat, that moisture can cause friction between the feet and the shoes. This can lead to blisters and broken skin. So, [how do you choose socks](#)? Here is some basic information you need to know when you go in search of running socks:

1. [Socks](#) made of wicking material keep feet dry when you run. Never ever wear cotton socks. Cotton socks hold sweat in which causes damp feet and, inevitably, blisters. Invest in socks that specifically are made for running. Expect to pay a premium, but the investment will be worth it.
2. Choose socks that are thin. This allows air to move between your socks and the shoe but not so much that your foot slides in the shoe and hinders your running. Some runners even wear two thin pair of socks so any sliding occurs between the socks and not the skin.
3. Seams can be your enemy. Find socks with woven-in seams or no seams at the toes and heels. This will help avoid additional friction in the shoe as well as those irritating spots in the toe box that keep bugging you, and worse.

Ladies – It's all About the Bra

Okay, women, it's true; [you need a good running bra](#). A proper running bra can help you avoid that up-down jostling that can make your breasts hurt during and after running. And, do we even need to mention the uncomfortable stares and general frustration when trying to control this extra "equipment" just to go out for a nice run. What can we do about this unmentionable topic? Let's take a peek:

1. Choose a bra that allows each breast its own separate chamber for minimum bounce and maximum support. Many women wear two bras; one for separated

support and one for bounce control.

2. Choose a bra made of wicking fabric and preferably two layers of “cooling” fabrics. Save your silky lacy stuff for the fancy night out; not for running. Underwires are a matter of preference. Even if you're used to wearing underwires, consider trying on other non-wire bras for running.

3. Choose [a high-impact bra for running](#) no matter what your cup size. Running bras are labeled with a maximum bounce factor, so be sure to compare. Look for actual “sized” bras, not S, M, L, and XL, especially if you typically need more support.

4. Try on a bra before buying to be sure it is comfortable and that you can get in and out of it with ease. If it seems like a straitjacket contraption when you're perfectly dry, just think what it will be like when you're all sweaty after a run. You could be trapped in that thing all night! Front closures and “normal” bra designs sell well for this reason.

More Gear to Improve Your Run

There are other parts of your attire that are vital to a runner’s life. Here are a couple items you'll want to invest in:

Sunglasses – In winter and summer, wear shades to keep the sun's damaging rays and glare out of the eyes. Also, being able to see oncoming traffic through a glaring sun is just a smart idea. You'll also appreciate the protection your eyes get from debris thrown up by passing car tires.

Hat – In cold weather you'll want a hat to hold in the heat. In hot weather you'll want to keep the sun off your head with a cap. A brimmed cap will shade your eyes and skin from the sun. There will also be days when you run in the rain (yes, there will be) so keep a lightweight breathable cap ready for those days.

Water Bottle – To stay hydrated as you run, you will need a specially designed container for liquids. There are several varieties to choose from to suit your needs. You will find out real fast which style works for you. There are super-duper hydration systems that you wear like a backpack, and then there are the simple water bottles you can carry in a waist pack. Either way, you need some way to carry water and other hydration drinks.

Sunscreen – Your skin will most likely be exposed to the sun during your run; especially around your neck, ears, face, and hands. Choose a sunscreen formulated for sports as it stays on even through sweat. If you are running longer than 30 minutes, be sure to bring your sunscreen along and reapply. Many of the new lines of sportswear even offer SPF clothing; tops and bottoms with built-in sun protection. Consider these

pieces for extra protection.

Stopwatch and Heart Rate Monitor – Keep up with your progress internally and externally with this fun gadget. Do you need it when you're a beginning runner? No. Is it fun? Yes. And, as you become a more advanced runner you will be keeping track of your heart rate and pulse and will find these gadgets handy.

Music – Although I can't say this is a vital piece of gear, **many runners find music**, and more importantly the rhythm of the music, to be a help in setting the pace and keeping the momentum going. After a certain point, music can also be a distraction as a runner is looking down the road at the miles yet to run. Be sure to get a player that fits and proper attachment gear so you aren't struggling with extra bulk or wires and gadgets that are flopping around.



Now that you are properly outfitted, what are you waiting for? The open road awaits! Go on and get training. Do I see a 5K or even a 10K in your future?

*Amazon offers a wide range of **fitness music** that you can choose from it has just about anything for any style or genre.*

Importance Of Hydration While Running – Choosing The Right Fluids

A large percentage of the human body is made up of water. Therefore, it is fair to say that water is an important element of human life. Considering how essential water is to your health, you'd be surprised how many people simply don't drink water. As a runner, you don't have that option. When you begin a running program, you need to learn about how hydration helps keep you safe and healthy while you run.

Water's Function in the Body

The importance of consuming enough water cannot be overstated. Water is used in the body to build muscle tissue as well as to transport nutrients between cells and through the bloodstream. Water is also important in the fatty tissue that insulates nerves, cells, and organs. The fact is, a body cannot live or function properly without water.

The body's cooling mechanism is sweat. Sweat is released through the pores as a way of cooling off the largest organ in your body – your skin. Sweat released through your skin lowers the body temperature so the internal environment will remain stable during exertion. However, when we lose water and nutrients in sweat in order to cool the body, water and nutrients have to be replaced or we may experience dehydration.



Sources of Hydration

The first source of hydration is water of course. Drink pure water and you can't go wrong. Now, you don't have to buy bottled water; just fill your water container with tap water, filtered if you wish. Cold water seems to absorb faster into the system and cools the body better. Place your water bottle in the fridge or freezer the night before your run so it's ready when you are.

Sports drinks are another source of hydration, but they are also a source of controversy. These beverages have more calories and sugar than water. As a main fluid source, stick with water. However, for replenishing nutrients during and after a long run (45 minutes or more), sports drinks can provide fluid along with electrolytes (potassium, sodium, chloride) and some carbohydrates which are needed to keep your energy up. So, choose sports drinks as only a portion of your hydration and only if you are exerting yourself for more than 45 minutes. And, in case you're wondering, sports drinks are not healthy for inactive people.

Then there is hydration through fruits and vegetables. Veggies like celery and fruits like watermelon are mostly water. So, even if you aren't keen on drinking a lot of water, you can increase your hydration by eating these water-rich veggies. Aim for about 20% of your total fluid intake coming from food.

How to Schedule Your Hydration

The best way to stay hydrated is to drink water throughout the day instead of all at once before you run. Hydrating your body all day long works better than cramming water into your system, hoping to meet your body's needs quickly. A stomach full of water sloshing around doesn't feel good and can make you feel sick when you run.

Try to drink about 96 ounces (about eight 12-ounce glasses) of water a day, with at least two glasses a couple of hours before you run, one glass right before your run, and two glasses after your run. Use this as a guide, but listen to your body and adjust as necessary. Carry water and sports drinks with you if you are running long distance and sip along the way, at least replenishing your fluids every 20 to 30 minutes.

To stay healthy while running, you need to stay hydrated. Keep your body and mind hydrated with plenty of water before, during, and after you run; and all day long!

Develop The Proper Running Form – How To Put Your Best Foot Forward

There is more to running than just getting out there and hitting the road. In order to run the right way and avoid injury, you must work on your form. While each person has a slightly different form, there are basics that are going to be the same for everyone.



- **Pay attention to posture** – Just like walking upright will help your back, so will running upright. Stand up where you are. Pretend someone is pulling you upward with a string from the crown of your head. Now, let your shoulders relax back and down. As for that core, pull your pelvis forward and the abdominal muscles in like your belly button is trying to reach your spine. This is a good start to your form.
- **Hold your arms at right angles to your body** – When you run, your arms will swing forward with the opposite leg. Keeping your arms up also increases your heart rate. Avoid clenching your fists as this restricts circulation.
- **Try not to look at the ground** – When you bend your head and look down, your shoulders and back bend forward to. It is hard to breathe this way. Even when you get tired, keep your head elevated. Look forward a few feet to see where you are going but resist the urge to bend down.
- **Try your stride** – There are different strides to running. Some people have a long stride like an antelope. Others have a shorter one. As you run, you can try both to see what works better for you. Some people find they strike the ground too hard with a long stride or are expending too much energy. A shorter stride means quicker foot switching.
- **Foot plant** – This refers to where on the foot you strike the ground. Some suggest hitting with the heel and rolling forward on the foot. Try it and if you feel pain

in the back of your legs or too much pressure in your knees, try a foot plant that is more towards the front of your foot, just about the ball of your foot or a little behind. This gives you a shorter stride but a more relaxed and lighter run.

- **Stay neutral** – Keep your hips in line with your shoulders. This avoids knee and hip flexor pain and injury. To keep those hips in line, perform strength training exercises to tighten your core muscles. Search online for any core strengthening exercises and do them routinely. Also, ask your local running club for good exercise suggestions.

Now, you have a basis with which to get started on your running form. No two people will run alike, and it might feel strange at first, but you can tweak your form until you find one that works for you.

Hot Weather Running - How To Run Safely When It's Hot

Running is one sport that can normally be done all year round. However, during hot weather, there are certain things you need to know in order to stay safe and healthy while you run. There are not a lot of excuses for avoiding your running program. You can usually adapt your program so you can run comfortably even when it is hot outdoors. There are some considerations, so let's take a look:

1. **Choose a cool time of day** – Some people are morning people and others like the afternoon or evening. When it's hot season, the mornings are usually cooler, so even if you are not an early bird, you may need to adjust your schedule to get your run in before the heat settles in. If you prefer to run in the evening, you may have to adjust your time and run later, after the sun has set.
2. **Choose your coolest clothing** – Black is a slimming color often chosen by people trying to look their best; however, black also absorbs heat. When you can't avoid the sun, you want to be wearing lighter color clothing. Choose fabrics that breathe or blends that are designed to wick the sweat away from your body. This also prevents chafing from friction and heat combined.
3. **Wear sunscreen** – An hour run in the sun, whether it's hot or not, can leave your sun burned and damaged. Avoid long term problems with sun exposure as well as the immediate problem of pink, sensitive skin rubbing against your clothing by applying liberal amounts of proper sunscreen products.
4. **Drink plenty of fluids** – When you sweat you lose lots of fluid and electrolytes. Before you run, make sure you have plenty of fluids on board to avoid dehydration and an all-around uncomfortable run. Invest in drinks that are specifically designed for runners with essential nutrients intended to keep fluid levels properly balanced with electrolytes, minerals, and vitamins. Alternate these drinks with water, or prepare a half-and-half mix with water.
5. **Choose shade** – In hot weather, look for shaded routes. Trees and green areas can help you conserve your energy and sweat a little less. Avoid concrete and blacktop as much as possible.

Dangers of Exposure to Heat

It is never good to be out too long in the heat. If the temperature is in the 80s or 90s, your body is going to feel stressed. You will need to modify your run to avoid dangerous conditions during hot days, even curtailing your activity until cooler weather prevails, or taking your activity into air conditioned comfort. Let's look at some of the problems that can occur if running during hot weather:

Hyperthermia

Heat stroke and heat exhaustion can be the results of hyperthermia, an elevated core body temperature. This rise in the core temperature occurs due to the body's failure to regulate the temperature when exposed to excessive heat. Simply put, hyperthermia occurs when the body absorbs more heat than it can handle. Normal sweat isn't dissipating the heat and the body temperature begins to elevate.

Heat exhaustion is what many people call the beginning stages of hyperthermia. To begin, you may not even feel particularly hot except what would be considered normal for someone running a couple of miles in the heat. But, when you come inside out of the heat, you can feel your temperature climbing. Some indications for early signs of heat exhaustion are hot, dry skin, skin that is red and blotchy, or skin that is pale and clammy.

If the body is unable to cool down, symptoms may become more serious, even leading to heat stroke. These symptoms may include dizziness, nausea, vomiting, headache, and low blood pressure, which may lead to fainting.

In severe cases, hyperthermia may lead to heat stroke which is characterized by confused behavior, even hostile behavior, sometimes described as “drunken” behavior. The heart rate and breathing will escalate as the blood pressure drops. The skin may appear pale at this point, even blue in color. Medical attention is needed immediately at the first signs of hyperthermia.

Heat Cramps

When you sweat, you also lose electrolytes like potassium and sodium. When the sweat dries on your face and it leaves a white film, that's salt. When you lose salt, it has to be replenished to keep your body, especially your muscles, working properly. If not, you can get muscle cramps in your stomach and your legs. Because you have lost so much fluid, you may also be weak and dizzy. These cramps usually happen after you have stopped exercising and not as you are still moving.

Keeping hydrated is important, but it's also important how you replace the electrolytes that you sweat out as you hydrate. Proper drinks with balanced electrolytes should be on every runner's “must have” list when they head out in the heat.

If you are running in the heat, stay protected using these tips. Avoiding the heat may be your best option if you want to return to running after the heat spell is over. However, a few sensible precautions can get you out there running even if the thermometer is climbing. Pay attention to your body and enjoy the run!

Cold Weather Running - How To Run Safely When It's Cold

When the weather gets chilly, you don't have to hang up your running shoes. You will have to modify your routine in order to get the same performance from your body when the temperature drops. Here are some tips on how to stay safe as it gets cold outside:

1. **Run with a partner** – When the time changes in the fall, the days get shorter. It is unwise to run alone at dusk or after dark. Have someone with you to help you stay safe. Two or more people together are always safer than one. Besides getting darker earlier, if a problem does arise because of the cold, your partner can call for help.
2. **Layer your clothing** – One way to keep from losing precious heat is to wear several layers of clothing. Wear your light weight, tight fitting wicking layer next to your body to prevent a chill. Add another layer over that, then add a lightweight jacket. Add to that a hat, scarf, and gloves. Now you can peel layers if the heat starts to climb.
3. **Take longer to warm up** – Stretching beforehand can help you warm up and limber up. Warm muscles are better than cold muscles. Start out slowly, taking a slow walk, then a brisk walk, for several minutes to raise your body temperature before breaking out into your full run.
4. **Use a good moisturizer** – While you may be warm inside, the outside of your body may be taking a beating from the elements. A good rich moisturizer with a sun protection factor can protect your face from wind burn and sun burn. Moisturize your entire body before suiting up. Cracked skin on feet can lead to blisters and other problems when you run. And, since the body loses more moisture when it's cold, this is a prudent preventative measure. Even if you are wearing gloves, remember to moisturize your hands, too.
5. **Run familiar trails** – This is important to remember when the cold weather also comes with ice and snow. Unfamiliar routes can lead to falls and injuries from ice and uneven snow covered surfaces, or obstacles hidden in snow.

Dangers of Exposure to Cold

We all know that we feel worse when we get chilled when we are fighting a cold. But, feeling under-the-weather isn't the only danger of exposure during a cold snap. Running when the temperatures are extremely cold can cause other problems, as well. Let's take a look:

Frostbite

Your digits (fingers and toes) are far away from the heat core of your body; your heart and lungs. When you are exposed to extreme cold, your body will conserve as much

heat as it can in the core of your body in order for your crucial organs to function properly. In other words, your body would sacrifice a few fingers and toes to survive.

When your body is exposed to cold, it starts to gather heat into the core of your body, and away from your digits, leaving them with less blood and warmth. Therefore, you have to provide your digits with super-insulating clothing to protect them from this dangerous condition. Any sign of bluing or tingling in your extremities can be a warning that frostbite is occurring.

At first signs of frostbite, get warm. Immerse your extremities in lukewarm water and call your doctor immediately if any redness, spotting, or discoloration appears. Rubbing the digits vigorously is likely to bruise or damage already sensitive tissues, so avoid any pressure to the skin.

Hypothermia

You may have heard this word but know very little about what it really means. This is a condition in which the core temperature of the body drops below what is considered normal, which is defined for basic body functions as 95 degrees Fahrenheit. The body temperature is usually around 98 to 100 degrees F, but when exposed to extreme cold, the body's internal mechanisms cannot replenish the heat of the body that is being lost. When this occurs, a drop in core temperature happens.

As the body's core temperature drops, symptoms occur that you may recognize; symptoms like shivering, bluing of extremities, and pale skin. However, other symptoms are not so familiar; symptoms like mental confusion, uncoordinated movements, slowed pace, stumbling, amnesia, difficulty speaking, stupor like behavior, slowed respiration, and increased heart rate.

At the first signs of hypothermia, you must find warmth and seek medical attention. You can't outrun the cold; you need to be smarter than it is. Certain conditions predispose a runner to hypothermia. You should always check with your doctor if you are a diabetic and plan to run in the cold. Also, any doctor or runner will tell you that alcoholic beverages and running in the cold don't mix.

If you are preparing to run year round, take precautions. Cold weather is just as dangerous as hot weather when you are exerting yourself. You can stay safe during most cold weather days by using sensible solutions for choosing gear, routes, and routines.

Common Running Injuries – Causes, Prevention, And Treatment

While running is a sport and a lot of fun, there is a downside – injuries. Learning what to watch out for can help you become aware of when you are dangerously close to an injury. You'll then be able to throttle your running back in order to heal and keep running happily in the future.

Running is no different from other sports. There can be injuries from over-training, poor technique, or poor equipment. Any injury can compromise your program, that's why you want to avoid injuries in the first place.

The key to avoiding injury is to be patient with yourself.

There might be days when you feel like you can run for hours, but if you have only been training for two weeks, it probably wouldn't be wise to run that length of time.

When you feel ready, run your training program with gusto and bask in the accomplishment. However,

doing too much too fast is a no-no. What happens when you run beyond your training?



Injuries To Know About

Runner's Knee

The medical name for runner's knee is patello-femoral syndrome. When you run, you may notice that your knees are giving you a bit of trouble. Almost every runner has a complaint or two about their knees at some point. The best thing to do right away is to find the source of the pain. There can be several reasons for knee pain during running:

- Improper shoes
- A hard surface
- An uneven surface
- Weakness in the knee area
- No rest days

When you begin running you will be using muscles that you never knew you had. Or, if you knew you had them, you didn't think they could make such a difference in how you felt. Some normal muscle soreness will occur, but serious pain, or unrelenting pain, is not normal. Swelling, tenderness, or any unusual pain should be considered serious enough to stop running and consult your doctor.

Plantar Fasciitis

Do your feet hurt when you run? Plantar fasciitis is caused by an inflammation of the fascia layer of connective tissue on the bottom of your feet, mainly the heels. When you run you may feel pain in the arches of your feet.

The inflamed fascia tightens up overnight so it is quite painful to walk and stretch your feet when you get up. That is a problem since your feet are bearing the brunt of the weight with each step you take as you run or during daily activity. Again, stop running when this occurs and consult your physician for the best method of treatment or therapy.

Shin Splints

Running, or even fast walking, can bring on shin splints. Your shins are the lower front part of your legs between your feet and your knees. When you start running, you may begin to feel a tightening or even a somewhat sharp pain in the front of your lower leg. Shin splints is often related to inadequate stretching of the shins and calves, over-training, a very hard surface, and starting off too fast. The pain associated with shin splints is often caused by over-exertion; stress your muscles are not ready for.

Shin splints are often preventable with adequate (and proper) stretching and warming up. However, I stress the word “proper” stretching. Be sure to ask your running club about stretching techniques that will help alleviate shin splints. All the stretching in the world will not prevent shin splints if you start out too fast or go too far before your muscles are ready. Starting out slowly and not exceeding your physical abilities seem to be the best way to avoid this problem.

This is a common complaint which makes some beginning runners think shin splints are not a real injury. That could not be further from the truth. Shin splints are not a little nuisance to be ignored or “walked off.” The pain we recognize as shin splints can be an indicator of more serious problems like tears in ligaments of the shin, calf, ankle area, and even stress fractures of the lower leg bones. When the muscle strength of the legs is exceeded by over-training, the pain known as shin splints is our warning to slow down and re-examine our running style and equipment.

Don't ignore shin splints when you feel the beginning signs. The injuries that shin splints may be warning you about could take you off the running circuit for months. When you experience the pain of shin splints, treat with the R.I.C.E. method – Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. If the pain persists or worsens, consult your doctor or physical therapist.

Blisters

The bane of every runner's existence. A blister may seem innocuous at first glance, however, if you are a runner, this is one painful injury that is to be feared.

A typical blister is formed by friction caused during the run, producing a fluid-filled sac as the top layers of skin separate from the lower layers. This simple injury can become excruciatingly painful as it gets bigger and bursts or tears. Complications can arise as raw skin is exposed to sweat and germs, causing bleeding and infection. That is why prevention is key.

How are blisters prevented? Properly fitted shoes worn with synthetic-fiber moisture-wicking double-layer socks without seams can help prevent blisters. However, even with all these precautions, some feet are still riddled with hotspots, the precursors to blisters.

Many runners use additional layering methods to prevent or protect blisters. You can start with bandages and progress to using mole-skin and other skin coating methods, including creams and jellies. Some runners even wrap their feet in duct tape. My advice is to try everything, but do so on your short training runs. Make notes about what works and what doesn't and use your successful blister-busting methods when you find them.

Once you get a blister, the prognosis is disappointing. Recovery often includes avoiding re-injuring the foot, which means not running. However, simple blisters can be treated and covered properly to allow continued running. Be sure to consult your doctor to get the final word on treatment and recovery.

Black Toenail

The injury with this descriptive name is something most runners will get as their running distance increases. Pressure being exerted on the toes as your foot slides slightly forward during your stride can create this condition. Proper room in the toe box of your shoe will help avoid this problem, as will keeping your toenails trimmed to the top of your toe, but not entirely. Even with adequate room, good shoes, and proper socks, this is an injury that continues to frustrate runners as they train, even being a "badge of courage" as a runner increases his or her distance.

What black toenail basically amounts to is an accumulation of fluid around and under the toenail caused by friction or pressure during a run. This fluid can build underneath the toenail and in the tissue around the toenail causing pain. Blood capillaries can break which colors the fluid red causing discoloration.

If the pressure gets great enough, the poor toenail will become separated from the soft tissue-like toenail underneath. That's when you see the black color, caused by the blood in the fluid. After weeks or sometimes even months, the separated toenail will finally fall off completely. The nail underneath may be somewhat deformed, but that is typically a temporary situation. As the nail grows out it will regain its normal shape and texture.

Protecting a sore toe which is going through the black toenail stages can be tricky. You don't want to add bulk to your toe by wrapping it with bandages, but you also don't want your toenail to suffer from the friction that caused the problem in the first place. There are several items on the market that will help, so be sure to ask at your running shop or club to see how others are treating their black toenails. If you have any long distance runners around you will be sure to get expert advice because it happens to them all.

As a disclaimer, I am not a doctor and therefore can only give information about what has worked for me and runners I know. Any injury, no matter how minor, must be examined and discussed with your doctor if you have other health concerns to consider or if the problem seems out of your realm of experience. Discomfort is not uncommon when you run, but pain and injury is not the norm and needs to be investigated. Learn to recognize stress in your body when you run and be sure to consult your doctor when unusual pain and injury occurs.

Taking Even Greater Strides Forward - Training Tips For Your First Race

For many beginning runners, the bug to run a race hits at some point. The idea of crossing a finish line becomes more and more appealing as your ability to run improves. All of the sudden, the thought that you can actually run a race takes root.

But in order to prepare for a 5K or 10K run you'll need determination, endurance, and a training program. Most importantly, don't skip that third step – the training program.

Let's talk about training. If you wanted to get started with boxing, you wouldn't just jump in the ring with a competitor the first day. Running is no different. Many beginning runners make the mistake of going out too fast and too far. Just like the tortoise, slow and steady wins the race. Here are some pointers to help you set a pace and begin a sensible training program that prepares you properly for your run:

- **Intensity** – This is how much you are exerting yourself as you run. If you are gasping for air as you run, you are definitely moving too fast. Ideally, your heart should not feel like it's beating out of your chest at any time during your run. Some exertion is expected, but you should not be struggling with pain in your chest or unable to catch your breath.
- **Heart rate** – When you run too fast, you compromise your body's functioning level as well as your breathing. Keeping the heart rate in the 65th to 85th percentile is optimum for most people. Staying within this range means your body is using its fuel at just the right level. When the heart rate rises too high, all sorts of struggles begin inside the body, working against you.
- **Endurance** – At first you won't be able to run very far or very fast but as you continue to train you will get better. Your lungs and heart will begin to adapt to the training program even before your muscles do. For a race like a 5K or 10K, your training period should be at least fifteen to twenty weeks in order to properly prepare your body and mind.

Training Programs

There are many plans to help train for a race. I suggest you start with a local running club if you have one. Getting personal help and support is invaluable. Local runners can recommend ways for you to train depending on fitness level and the type of running you want to do, as well as your own region, weather, and environment.

Go ahead and search online for “5K or 10K training programs” or “running training programs” to find suggested training schedules. Many of the sites you find will have interactive calendars that map out your daily exercise and running plan. New runners especially like these kinds of plans as they leave nothing to debate. Here's your plan; stick to it; no questions asked.

One popular training plan that works for those who are not runners (yet) or who have limited fitness levels in the beginning is the walk/run method. With this training method, you walk and run at intervals for a scheduled amount of time or distance every day or every other day. Then, as you progress each week, you increase the run time and decrease the walk time.

Many training programs suggest days off from your running. However, on the off days, some other form of exercise is recommended to build strength and endurance. You also need to give the body time to recover from your runs. Most training plans also recommend one easy run once or twice a week to prevent burnout.

Now that you have your schedule printed, are you ready to start your training? Get a mental picture firmly planted in your mind, imagining yourself crossing the finish line. That's the beginning of your training schedule; picturing the finish. Now, gather your gear and set out slowly. With the proper mindset and training, a very rewarding and successful race day awaits.

In Conclusion

It doesn't matter if you've been keeping your couch company for years; running for fitness and fun is something you can learn to do, and do well. Starting out with just a few basic necessities, you can head down the road and enjoy each new step.

Start out slowly at first, getting accustomed to your physical abilities, then increase your time, distance, and intensity as your body allows. Expect some setbacks as every runner does; beginner or professional. There will be at least a few blisters to contend with, and times when you welcome an ice bag or two. But, the rewards are well worth it!

Here's where I remind you that I am not a doctor. I am a runner who enjoys the wind and the road. When you decide to begin running as a sport or fitness program, be sure to consult your own health care professional. A thorough examination by your doctor is important to identify any issues that would need attendance before, during, or after you run. Your doctor can also advise you on how to avoid or treat minor injuries. So, again, do not begin a running program without first talking to your doctor.

Now, are you ready to head out? Your first steps will always be the hardest to take. But, soon you won't be able to resist the temptation when the road starts calling your name. That's when you can say **"I'm a runner!"**