

Avoiding Running Injuries

Running injuries can be prevented by selecting the **correct running shoe** for your style, **warming up** and **cooling down**, **stretching** and strengthening and probably most importantly for the runner a **gradual** and progressive training program. **Sports massage** and **nutrition** can also play a part.

Shoe Selection

It is important you know if your feet are 'neutral', 'supinate' or 'pronate'. The runner that pronates (feet roll inwards) when they run will require a different running shoe to the supinator (rolls out). If you are not sure which you are then visit a specialist running shoe shop - not a high street fashion shop for your shoes.

Shoes are generally divided into two categories:

- Neutral shoes may be well cushioned for shock absorption but have no special features to correct the motion of your foot.
- Motion control shoes will have extra support on the inside to help prevent the foot rolling in or pronating.

The runner that supinates should choose a neutral shoe with good cushioning. A pronating runner needs a motion control shoe with medial support or in more severe cases orthotics may be required. (If you wear orthotics then a stable, neutral shoe is what is needed).

Warm Up

Warming up is often overlooked but should be part of your injury prevention routine. A good warm will:

- Increase the temperature of muscles - they work better at a temperature of 40 degrees.
- Increase blood flow and oxygen to muscles.
- Increase the speed of nerve impulses - making you faster.
- Increase range of motion at joints reducing the risk of tearing muscles and ligaments.

Warm up will not only help avoid injury but will also improve performance. A warm up should last around 10 - 15 minutes and consist of:

- Gentle jog to circulate blood and oxygen supplying the muscles with more energy to work with.
- Stretching to increase the range of motion at joints. Emphasis should be placed on stretching the hip flexor muscles, quadriceps, hamstrings, lower back, adductor muscles as well as those on the outside of the hips.

Cool Down

This is also often overlooked in favor of the bar but can help avoid injuries and boost performance. The aim of the cool down is to:

- Gradually lower heart rate.
- Circulate blood and oxygen to muscles, restoring them to the condition they were in before exercise.
- Remove waste products such as lactic acid.
- Reduce the risk of muscle soreness.
- The cool down should include a gentle jog followed by light stretching.

Sports Massage

Getting a regular sports massage can flush the muscles of waste products and release tight knots, lumps and bumps in muscles that if left may cause strains and tears. It is possible for a good sports massage therapist to identify trouble spots long before they become injuries.

Nutrition and Hydration

Proper nutrition is important. A bad diet will prevent you from recovering from training sessions making you more prone to injury. A balanced diet is what you should aim for:

- Carbohydrate is important for refueling muscles.
- Protein rebuilds muscles.
- If you become dehydrated then less blood will flow through muscles. The muscles will be more prone to injury.
- Vitamins and minerals are required for a number of reasons related to recovery.

Much of what is discussed above should be part any sports routine. A biomechanical analysis can help identify possible injury risks. Assessment from a sports therapist or specialist can identify weak areas and possible injury risks. A course of exercises specific to your needs can give you the best chance of avoiding injury.

Training

Not allowing your body to recover properly will eventually result in injury. You should increase weekly mileage by no more than 10% from the previous week. Your body needs time to rebuild itself before the next training session. Remember - you are not improving when you are training, you are improving during recovery.