

## How to Care for Your Body While Running

Running is often mentioned as one of the best forms of exercise. While great for losing weight and building muscle, it can actually cause more harm than good if you don't properly care for your body.

Whether you are training for a marathon or jogging around the track, these five steps will help keep your body from enduring unnecessary stress or injury, help you increase your speed and reduce the amount of aches and pains you feel during your run.

### **1. Formulate a running plan based on your fitness goals and abilities.**

While it's always important to start your run with a warm-up and end with cool down, what is in between should be catered to each individual runner. Ultimately, you know your body best; listen to it! Start a running diary to chronicle how you feel before, during and after each run and to determine the progression of your running goals. Join a running group or talk to a seasoned expert to formulate a running plan based on your training level and running diary observations.

### **2. Invest in an actual running shoe.**

A specialty running-shoe retailer will suggest shoes based on the way you run and the make-up of your feet. Wear the shoes around the store for at least ten minutes to test them before you commit as it is up to you to determine if they are comfortable. (Note: It's important that they fit snug to reduce the risk of blisters.) If you find a perfect shoe, invest in a few pairs because a running shoe only has a life span of about six months or 500 miles.

### **3. Maintain a healthy diet and continuously rehydrate.**

It is important that while training you take in the proper amounts of nutrients and vitamins to maintain your energy and eliminate cramping. While you are training, eat foods that contain calcium, protein, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates. Lean meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes are all great choices.

Hydration is particularly important before and during your run. When sweating you lose electrolytes, so drinking sports drinks are a good addition to water.

### **4. Remain in constant control of your body while running.**

Pay particular attention to your running form. It is important your body stay relaxed and in perfect alignment. Keep your head up, your back straight and your hips facing forward. Your arms should remain at a 90-degree angle, and your hands should stay loose. Keep your shoulders and neck relaxed while you run. Don't bounce or take too big of strides.

#### **5. Keep your breathing in check.**

You should be breathing deeply from your belly and not your chest. Take breaths in through both your nose and breathe out through your mouth. When running with a partner, take the “talk” test. If you are unable to carry on a conversation while you are running then you may need to decrease your intensity.

Slight aches and pains are okay and even welcomed after a run, but if you start to feel severe pain, pause your training and visit with your physician about your condition. For more information about caring for your body while running regularly talk with your doctor.