

Injury Prevention: What You Can Do.



Many common running injuries can be avoided by learning how to detect early warning signs and beginning the proper treatment right away. Running injuries are often caused by poor biomechanics, the wrong shoes/insoles and are often a result of over-training (too much or too much too soon). Runners often ignore early warning signs that allow injuries to build slowly and are only addressed by runners when they become debilitating. However, if caught early most injuries can also be remedied with quick, smart action.

For runners, injuries to the lower legs are the most common but pain in the hips and low back can also develop. Four of the most common (and frustrating) runner's injuries are:

- Runner's Knee (patellofemoral pain syndrome – front of knee)
- Shin Splints (medial tibial stress syndrome – front of shin)
- Achilles Tendonopathy (Achilles tendon)
- Plantar Fasciitis (Arch or sole of the foot)

Each of these conditions begin with a mild to moderate soreness that can, but should not be, ignored during a run, the so called “push through” effect. Runners may experience pain that starts after an

abrupt increase in mileage or frequency of runs. The key is to recognize that pain in these areas is not your body's natural response; it is a sign that something is wrong! Many runners will choose to push through the initial mild pain but the majority of the time if they would have done a few simple things they could avoid the inevitable injury.

Step 1: REST!

The treatment for all of these injuries is the one thing runner's hate to hear, but it's also the one thing that works. This doesn't mean you have to stop exercising all together. You simply have to scale down your routine to one that doesn't cause pain. Sometimes taking a small break or more frequent rest days are all you need.

Step 2: Evaluate.

What has changed? Have you warmed up and cooled down properly, increased your mileage or your frequency? Did you change your shoes or they worn out? Are you on the right surface? If you're just starting out do you have the right shoes, technique, surface, pace or distance? These are all factors which can easily be modified and potentially stop your would-be injury in its tracks.

Step 3: See Your Doctor.

If you have increased your rest, slowed your pace, decreased your miles, changed your shoes and got some help on your technique and you are still having pain, it's time to see your doctor. He or she can perform a physical exam, potentially take an x-ray and decide if your pain is something more serious like a stress fracture. If there isn't a more serious underlying problem your doctor may recommend a short course of physical therapy where you can be further evaluated and treated for any muscle weakness, imbalance or technique issues. The physical therapist may also be able to give you a more detailed training plan in order to safely reach your goals.

The most important thing is to recognize an injury early so that a few simple steps and a small amount of rest can save you from more frustrations, more complex treatments and a longer sentence of exile to your couch.



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