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## How not to get injured

Unfortunately, running injuries are almost part of the game. Run long enough or hard enough, and you'll probably come down with an ache that will temporarily sideline you.

Fortunately, most running injuries are short-term. After a few days or weeks of rest, you can return to your regular routine. Still, there is a better way: Don't get injured in the first place.

### **Warm up, cool down**

When you first get up in the morning, your muscles and soft tissue are tight. As you move around, they stretch to their normal lengths. Then when you start to exercise, your muscles stretch even more. Make it a habit to warm up before a run or race - begin with a walk and gradually increase the speed before you break into a run.

### **Stretch out**

Without flexibility, you are an injury waiting to happen. Tight muscles cannot go through their full range of motion. Stretching is not the same as warming up. Trying to stretch cold muscles may cause injury. The best time to stretch is after a run, when your muscles are warm and elongated. Make stretching part of your routine every day.

### **Back off**

If you train hard every day, you'll wear your body down rather than build it up. You need to recover after a tough training session or a race - give your muscles a chance to mend and stock up on glycogen for your next hard effort. Give yourself at least one day of easy running or rest between hard efforts. If you run fast one day, train slowly the next. If you do a long run one day, plan a short one for the following day. This is the hard-easy method of training.

### **Chill out**

Let your training schedule be your guide - but never your jailer. One of the surest ways to become injured is to train hard on a day when you're fatigued or feeling soreness or the pain of an injury about to happen. Even if you're following all of the rules - running on a good surface, warming up, stretching, using a hard-easy pattern - other factors of your lifestyle figure into your physical wellbeing and level of fatigue. Stress at work or home or lack of sleep can take a toll as well.

### **Branch out**

It's a rare runner today who doesn't employ some cross-training, which means using other activities to keep fit and improve your running. Doing another physical activity a couple of times a week gives your feet and legs a welcome respite from the constant pounding of running and strengthens muscles that running does not exercise. In both of



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these ways, cross-training can help to protect you from injury. Try swimming at Newport Swimming Pool – there is a handy 'early birds' session from 7 til 9 every morning (phone 811520). Or get the bike out! Or book a session in a gym - by using a stair-climber, rowing machine or cross-country ski machine, you can take the stress off any injured area and still get an excellent cardiovascular work-out.

### **But if you do get injured...**

Get help and advice as quickly as possible. Don't 'leave it to get better' – it won't. Ask your GP to refer you to a physiotherapist if you seem to have a soft tissue injury. For more persistent, recurring problems you may need more corrective work like manipulative massage or possible chiropractor. The important thing is to find out why the injury happened – not just getting it treated.

After a layoff or an injury, your feet and legs, bones and joints are just not ready for any pounding. They have become somewhat soft and lazy, and it takes time to build them to the point at which they can take the forces of running without becoming re-injured.

And even though you may not feel any symptoms, the area you hurt will be weaker than it was before your injury and more susceptible to re-injury. If you stress your body too much too soon, the same symptoms are likely to reappear.

You simply cannot rush your recovery. As you become stronger and start to run regularly, increase your weekly distance by no more than 10 per cent. This rule applies if you're healthy, too.

Finally, be sure to eat well. You need nutrients to help your body to mend the injured area and to fuel your training once you renew your running programme. If you do gain a few pounds during your recovery period, they'll just melt away when you begin running again.

For more information visit [www.runnersworld.co.uk/news/article.asp?UAN=197](http://www.runnersworld.co.uk/news/article.asp?UAN=197)

### **Help with injuries:**

- Lilleshall Sports Injuries, Sports physiotherapy and rehabilitation. Call 01952-605828 [www.guide-information.org.uk/guidelist.aspx?recid=G9337](http://www.guide-information.org.uk/guidelist.aspx?recid=G9337)
- Newport Complementary Health Clinic. Remedial massage and manipulative therapy. Call Michael on 07980 566848
- Sue Pearson, Chartered Physiotherapist, Physiofirst Physiotherapy and Sport Injury Practice, call Sue on 01952 825897
- Active calm sports and relaxation massage, Diane Spencer 01938 556568 Or 07914 893082



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