

Runners: Prevent injury by avoiding common mistakes

October 12 2012, by Dr. Robert Maschi

The fall season is a popular time of year for many to train and run marathons—premiere events such as the New York City Marathon, Marine Corps Marathon and Philadelphia Marathon will take place over the next several months. Because of the large amount of training mileage required to compete, runners are susceptible to injury. Those new to the sport who are participating in their first marathon are especially vulnerable to injury. Training errors are the most common cause of running injuries. Risk for overuse injuries can be reduced if runners follow some simple training guidelines.

Many runners think that they don't need to perform strength [training](#) for their legs, because they use those muscles [running](#). [Strength training](#) is necessary to create a stable platform to support high volume or [high intensity training](#). Many people make the mistake of running to train, rather than training to run. Runners gearing up for longer distance races should incorporate 1-2 workouts per week that focus on developing core stability and hip strength.

Another common mistake is made when runners don't give their bodies adequate rest. Many feel they're losing ground when they rest, but recovery days are just as important as workouts. Rest days allow your body to rebuild and get stronger. Depending on running experience, 1-2 rest days per week are appropriate. Those who have more running experience may not need as much recovery as those pushing themselves to further distances for the first time.

Here are the most common training mistakes runners make:

- Increasing mileage or intensity too quickly. Increase your training mileage/time by no more than 10-20 percent weekly. For example, if you're currently running 10 miles per week, increase your total weekly mileage by no more than 1-2 miles the next week. A periodic long run is part of race preparation, but you should reduce other training components or introduce a rest day. Gradually introduce speed or hill work. Change only one training component at a time. For example, if you've decided to begin some hill work or interval training (increased intensity), don't increase your running mileage the same week.
- Ignoring the warning signs of an injury and continue to train with pain. This is a sure way to end up watching other people run races. Seek help if you feel an injury may be developing.
- No rest. You should have at least one rest day each week. You should also have periodic light training weeks (every 4-6 weeks), particularly after a race or heavy training week.
- Neglecting a proper stretching and strengthening program. Due to the repetitive nature of running, muscle imbalances that cause injuries are very common. Tight or weak muscles should be addressed with a specific conditioning program to avoid breakdown from the chronic stress of running training.
- Worn-out or improperly fitting running shoes. Train in a supportive, well-fitting pair of running shoes, with ample room in the toe box. Depending on your weight and running surface, you should replace your running shoes every 250-350 miles. The sole of your shoe is made with extremely durable rubber which may still look good even if the midsole is no longer providing cushioning or support. Remember that shoes wear out before they look worn out—shoes have a "shelf life." Nagging foot, knee, back or hip pain may be another signal that you need new

footwear.

- Trying to make up for a lost week of running (due to illness or travel) by doubling your mileage the next week. If you don't give your body adequate time to adapt to the stresses being placed on it, it will break down and an injury will result. Always increase your training in a gradual, step-wise progression. Do not skip steps.

Provided by Drexel University

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