

Expert tips for reducing running injuries

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(HealthDay)—Most runners are enthusiastic about their sport and take steps to work out safely. But injuries like stress fractures and muscle strains, among others, are common and can sideline you, sometimes for

weeks if not months.

Researchers point to hard heel-toe landings as one key [injury](#) risk factor. This type of landing increases vertical load rate—the amount of force your body absorbs on impact, making you more prone to injury.

One obvious adjustment is to aim for a forefoot landing. But biomechanics expert and author Jay Dicharry says that's not the only answer—and it's not the answer for everyone.

Another adjustment to consider involves your posture. If you can avoid arching your back and keep your torso centered over your lower body when running, you can lower your vertical load rate. Running barefoot is one way to practice this positioning.

Keep in mind that preventing injuries begins before you hit the ground running, according to experts at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire. Strength training to develop all [muscle](#) groups reduces the muscle fatigue that can lead to poor performance and injuries. Daily stretching—only after muscles are warm—also prevents injuries. Include dynamic moves like high knee drills, skipping, bounding, arm circles and cross body arm swings.

As focused as you might be on running, cross-training can actually help you avoid overuse injuries. Be sure to add rest days for recovery to your schedule.

To maximize fitness and minimize the [negative effects](#) of running *before an injury occurs*, consider consulting with an expert in running biomechanics. Such an expert can analyze your gait, identify weaknesses and make suggestions for better form, running shoes and, if needed, orthotics.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more suggestions for [avoiding running injuries](#), including a warm-up routine.

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