Getting back into running after lockdowns: How to do it safely

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If you plan to resume running after an extended break due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, you need to ease back in, one expert advises.

"There are a lot of good programs, including Couch to 5K or C25K, that focus on increasing running slowly up to about 3 miles or 30 minutes," said physical therapist Grace Neurohr, a running and bio-motion specialist for the Rubin Institute for Advanced Orthopedics at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore.

"Depending on what your goals are, I typically recommend adding in a run up to three times per week and giving yourself at least one day of rest between each day to avoid overtraining," she said in a Lifebridge Health news release.

In setting your initial running goals, consider your current health status, the length of your time off from general exercise and how much time you can spend training.

"For most individuals, a goal of a 5k or 3-mile distance is a good place to start," Neurohr said. "You can further challenge yourself by trying out more challenging terrain such as trail running or hill intervals."

Running too far too soon puts you at risk of overuse injuries. It's best to begin with a gradual walk/run interval program, she advised, and also to have a specialist assess your injury risk and recommend specific exercises to help you avoid injuries.

It's especially important not to push yourself too hard if you've had COVID-19, be it weeks or months before starting or returning to running, she added.

You should carefully monitor [shortness of breath](link), [heart rate](link) and [oxygen saturation](link) while you run, because pulmonary embolisms ([blood clots](link) in the lungs) have occurred up to several months after a COVID-19

diagnosis.

"While this is rare, these can be life-threatening even in active, fit individuals," Neurohr said.

If you have underlying heart or lung conditions or had to be hospitalized for COVID-19 symptoms, you need medical clearance to run, she stressed.

"If you had a very mild case and have been symptom-free for at least seven days, you likely can initiate a light exercise program," Neurohr said.

But even young, healthy adults who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past few months should consult their doctor before resuming vigorous exercise like running, she added.

 More information: For more on returning to physical activity after COVID-19, visit the Cleveland Clinic website.

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