

Ready to run: What are some signs of overtraining?

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We're surrounded by warning signs on roads, at work, and on packaging and equipment. Your body sends warning signs too. As your race date nears, it's tempting to pull out all the stops in your training. That makes

this a prime time to watch for warning signs of overtraining.

Overtraining or [overuse injuries](#) are any muscle or joint injuries, such as tendinitis or a [stress fracture](#), that result from repetitive trauma. Overuse injuries typically occur because of [training](#) or technique errors.

Runners are tenacious athletes. When you dramatically increase your training intensity, don't ignore your body's warning signs. Pulling back and slowing down may be tough. While some overtraining issues can be resolved with simple rest, others may evolve into more significant problems.

How overtraining and overuse injuries occur

Going too fast, exercising for too long or simply doing too much of one type of activity can strain your muscles and lead to an overuse injury. Improper technique also takes a toll on your body. For example, if you use poor form while running or doing strength training exercises, you may overload certain muscles and cause an overuse injury.

Thankfully, most overuse injuries are avoidable. Try these suggestions to prevent them:

- Use proper form and gear. Whether you're starting a new activity or have been playing a sport for a long time, taking lessons can help ensure you're using the correct technique. Talk with an expert about [proper form](#), equipment and gear fit to help ensure success.
- Pace yourself. Rely on your training program, which should be spreading your aerobic activity throughout the week. Take time to warm up before physical activity and cool down afterward.
- Gradually increase your activity level. When changing the intensity or duration of [physical activity](#), do so gradually. Try not

to increase anything by more than about 10% per week. Your body needs time to adapt to the new stress.

- Mix up your routine. Instead of focusing on one type of exercise, build variety into your training program. Doing a variety of low-impact activities prevents overuse injuries by allowing your body to use different muscle groups.

Overtraining signs and what to do

It can be hard to know when you're pushing through your training for continuous improvement and when you're moving into overtraining. Focusing on your diet, hydration and sleep can help you figure out what your body is telling you. If you don't recover after two to three days of little or no activity, it may be time to look further.

Your feet and legs take a pounding as you run mile after mile, so watch for these issues:

- Callous blistering and broken toenails are common overtraining problems.
- Early morning pain on the sole of your foot can be a sign of plantar fasciitis.
- Tendinitis can leave you with pain in the back of your ankle or in the front of your shins, also called shin splints.

These typically can be treated with rest and medication to relieve pain and inflammation. Slow down your training. Return to the level you were at before the problem or consider cross-training with low- or no-impact exercise, such as a stationary bike, elliptical or swimming. Take an extra day off. These symptoms can be short-term if you treat them early and appropriately.

If pain continues despite rest or gets worse, it could indicate a bone

issue, which potentially is serious. Stress reactions or stress fractures are common in the mid-foot, mid-shin or, most concerning, high up in your leg by your hip. Pain that doesn't go away is a symptom, so consult your health care team.

What to do if you suspect an overuse injury

Tell your health care team if you've recently changed your workout technique, intensity, duration, frequency or types of exercises.

Identifying the cause of your overuse injury will help you correct the problem and avoid repeating it. You can seek further guidance by talking with specialists, such as sports medicine physicians, athletic trainers and physical therapists.

Once your [injury](#) has healed, ask your health care team to check that you've completely regained strength, motion, flexibility and balance before beginning the activity again. Pay special attention to proper technique to avoid future injuries.

Staying strong

Don't allow an [overuse injury](#) to prevent you from being physically active. By working with your health care team, listening to your body and pacing yourself, you can avoid this common setback and safely increase your activity level.

Knowing you worked hard to prepare will add to your feeling of accomplishment on race day, but don't overdo it. You're almost there. Take care of yourself so you can keep going strong all the way to the finish line.

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