

HOW TO KEEP INJURY-FREE

SOMETIMES IT CAN'T BE AVOIDED BUT MINIMISE YOUR CHANCES BY GETTING YOUR TRAINING AND TECHNIQUE RIGHT – AND HAVE THE OCCASIONAL BREAK, WRITES **LIZ COSTIGAN**

You have successfully started your running programme, following the three to five-day plan and it's all going well. But a couple of weeks in, you feel a twinge, you stretch a bit, pop a painkiller and away you go again, not a bother right? Wrong. A couple of runs later, you are on the couch with an ice pack and your goal of completing your 10k race is a distant memory. Twinges and niggles are all part of running.

Injury affects every runner at some point but it doesn't have to mean the end

of your running dream. As I said last week, life can get in the way and injury can too. What we need, first of all, is to do our very best to avoid injury, but we must also be ready to deal with it when and if it does happen.

Injuries occur due to many factors including an error in your training, incorrect technique or the wrong shoes. All of the above can be worked on and can help reduce your chance of injury.

TRAINING:

By following a plan like the one we

have below, you are giving yourself the best chance of safely achieving your goal. Vary your workout between short, medium and long runs. Adding strength to your workout plan is vital as we have seen over the past weeks.

There is no denying that if you have a strong body, it will help with the impact that running has on your muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons. One of the reasons why many people get injured at the beginning of their running adventure is because of weak muscles.

The body compensates, and other muscles work overtime thus leading to injury. I have two strength sessions in the programme weekly because I believe it is really important

for people who are new to running to strengthen their bodies and help avoid injury.

Being injured is scary and when we are faced with a pull or a tear, often it is the end of the running road for a lot of people. I don't want this to happen to you guys this early on.

I know it can be tough to fit everything in and when you are stuck for time you think running is the only way, but as I said last week you need to mix up your training to ensure you benefit from all of the elements of the plan.

TECHNIQUE:

This is probably the most important part of injury prevention. I recently attended a running seminar with Catherina McKiernan, one of the world's best cross-country runners and fellow *FIT Magazine* columnist.

She is a truly inspirational and lovely person. On top of her outstanding running successes, she is also a master of Chi running, which is a running technique that helps reduce or eliminate injury by focusing on building a healthy body. It is well worth taking a look at her website and trying to apply the techniques to your own runs.

You can change how you run, it takes time and practice but, if you are willing to put in the work, the benefits will be endless.

Here are some elements to focus on when you are running :

- **Posture** Stand tall with your head up and neck in line with your spine. Create a straight line from your ears, shoulders, hips, knees and toes. Look ahead.
- **Arms** Bend your elbows at about 90 degrees; lightly cup your hands. Don't let your hands drop below your waist. Point your arms in the direction that you are going, avoid crossing the body's mid-line.

Remember to use the arms just as much as you use your legs.

- **Lean** Lean from the ankles without bending the hips, this takes practice. Try to keep your body weight gently forward, using gravity to help you move.
- **Mid Foot Strike** Avoid running on your toes or heels, aim to run with a mid-foot strike with the foot landing softly under your hip line which ensures less impact on your body.

REST:

Queue runner's eye roll. Everybody hates this part when they are 'in the zone'. But it too is vital to your ultimate success. It is part of the programme. Your body must recover and rest for it to be able to sustain the level of training you are asking it to do. This is even more important for those of you who are totally new to running. Imagine the shock your poor body has had over the past four weeks.

Going from the blissful sugar-filled festive season to this onslaught of clean food and fitness. Give yourself a chance to be the best that you can be by training hard and resting even harder. Don't be afraid to take a day or two off if you wake up with heavy legs and a tired body. If you go out when you are exhausted it is the perfect time to pick up an injury. Missing a session isn't the end of the world and you will feel the better for it the following day. Best of luck everybody!

Enter the March 9 FIT Phoenix Park 5K/10K at www.fitmagazine.ie/events

For tips on running, fitness and health see facebook.com/positivefitnesspt and Twitter: @LizCostigan



Week 4 5k-10k programme

To participate in this 10k programme, you should have no major health problems, be in reasonably good shape, and have completed the walk-to-run 5k programme.

Monday	Strength
Tuesday	5k run
Wednesday	Rest
Thursday	3.5k run + Strength
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Cross-train
Sunday	8k run