

personaltrainer

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Profit from Positive Running

Simple tips will help you avoid injury and stay safe while you're out pounding the fitness beat

IF YOU have been inspired by the many races take place all over the country or by the hordes of people running in the parks and streets at the weekend and would like to give it a go yourself, I have some helpful tips on technique and injury prevention.

These tips are for the complete beginner and the avid runner. It is important for everyone to run correctly. I call it Positive Running.

TECHNIQUE

■ Look Ahead

Your eyes should be focused on the ground just ahead of you. Don't stare at your feet. Not only is this proper running form, but it's also a safer way to run because you can see what's coming and avoid falling.

■ Land Mid-foot

If you run on your toes, your calves will get tight and fatigue quickly. If you land on your heels, you are over-striding and wasting valuable energy.

Try to land on the middle of your foot, and then roll through to the front of your toes. Also keep your toes pointing ahead.

■ **Don't over-use your arms**
Lots of people hold tension

in their upper body when running. Try to relax, keep your hands at waist level and at a 90-degree angle.

Try not to clench your fists as it can lead to tightness in the arms, shoulders and neck. Relax, enjoy and let your arms help you along.

■ Check Your Posture

Run tall and proud. Keep your head up, back straight and shoulders under your ears and maintain a neutral pelvis.

Make sure you're not leaning forward or backward at your waist, which can happen when you get tired. When you feel yourself slouching, lift the chest and think "tall and proud".

INJURY PREVENTION

By taking a few precautions and planning, you can prevent many common running injuries. Here are some tips:

■ Listen to your body

Don't ignore pain. A little discomfort is okay, but pain is a no-no. Have a rest, and if the pain persists, see a physiotherapist. Don't let something trivial turn into a real injury.

If you are active you will have to visit a physio from time to time, so don't put it



off - nip any pain or injury in the bud.

■ Create a running plan

Talk to someone who knows about running and can help you create a running plan that is in line with your current fitness abilities and long-term goals.

■ Warm up and stretch

This is about listening to your body. Everyone is different, and when you get to know your body better you will know how much time you require to warm up and if you need to stretch. This is very individual.

If you are a beginner, I would recommend warming up with a 10-minute fast walk and a gentle stretch of the calf, hamstrings, groin and quadricep muscles. As you progress with your running, you can decide what works best for you.

■ Strength train

Add weight training and core exercises to your routine. This strengthens muscles that aid performance and help reduce injury. Strength training also helps with rehabilitation if you do get injured.

■ Cross-train

Don't just run, mix it up. Swim, cycle, do yoga or some other activity. This helps prevent over-use of certain muscles.

■ Be shoe-savvy

Invest in a good pair of runners for support. As I mentioned in last week's article, gait analysis is hugely important when choosing the right runner.

It takes five minutes and will make a world of difference to your running. Your running style is assessed so that the right trainer can be selected for you.

■ Be safe

If you decide to run after dark - which I don't do as I'm too scared - run in well lit areas or use a light so that you can be seen.

It might sound silly, but keep your phone with you, on silent if you don't want to be disturbed, and some ID. If

running with headphones, keep the volume low enough so that you can hear cars. Run with a buddy if you can. Let someone know your route when setting off on a run.

And if you get a dreaded injury, RICE - Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.

■ Rest

Take it easy. If you keep running, your injury may get worse. It is always difficult to rest when you are in the zone and enjoying your running, but you must listen to your body.

Choose alternative ways to exercise while you heal, such as swimming or cycling or upper body training.

■ Ice

Apply ice packs (or frozen peas, of course) to reduce pain, inflammation and swelling.

■ Compression

Wrap the affected area with tape and use splints and supports to control swelling and stabilise.

■ Elevate

If you sprain your ankle or hurt your foot, elevate it to reduce swelling.

If the pain persists, see a physiotherapist who will be able to guide you back to full health.

Positive Running classes are held every Saturday in Dublin's Phoenix Park.

Contact: positivefitnesspt@gmail.com or [facebook.com/positivefitnesspt](https://www.facebook.com/positivefitnesspt)

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