

Focused on a 5K: Preventing Injuries

When it comes to physical activities that are a little more intense such as jogging or running taking care of your body to prevent injury is important. The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine lists four times when a runner is most prone to injury: the beginning phase (first four to six months), returning to running following an injury, increasing distance of running, and increasing how fast you are running.

Inexperienced runners should begin by gathering information about types of injuries and how to prevent them. Taking some extra time to learn about injury prevention will save you from having to take time off from running due to an injury.

Common Injuries

Running injuries result from repetitive motion and/or improper training and warm-up for running. Even the most experienced runners can get injured. Most injuries occur in the musculoskeletal system (muscles and bones) and/or soft tissues supporting a joint. These injuries usually involve the hip, knee, ankle, or foot.

Runner's Knee

- One of the most common injuries to runners.
- Injury to the muscles, tendons, and cartilage supporting the knee cap.
- Generally occurs over a period of time.
- Taking extra time when beginning your training plan and following good running guidelines can decrease your chances of having this type of injury.



Stress Fracture

- A tiny “crack” in a bone, sometimes it is almost invisible.
- Results from suddenly increasing the amount of physical activity without proper training and conditioning of the body.
- Most often seen in the foot, ankle, or lower leg. This can sometimes be the result of improper or old footwear.
- If you suspect you have a stress fracture **stop running** and see a health care provider such as a doctor, athletic trainer, or physical therapist. **Do not** run until your stress fracture is healed. Running on the “cracked bone” will increase your chances of a full fracture.

Ankle Sprains

- Occur when the ligaments supporting the ankle are torn or stretched.
- Range from mild to severe depending upon whether the ligament is stretched or completely torn.
- More common in cross-country runners or hikers but can occur in runners who run on uneven surfaces or in areas where there are a lot of potholes or ruts.

Blisters

- Develop when constant rubbing occurs from the shoe or sock to an area of the ankle, foot, or toes.
- Caused from shoes that don't fit correctly and moisture from sweating.

How to prevent or decrease your chance of injury

- Have a health checkup with your health care provider before you begin a running routine.
- Learn about running injuries and how to prevent them.
- Buy and wear good fitting athletic shoes made for running.
- Warm up before beginning a run.
- Stretch after your warm up or after your run.
- Begin slowly and gradually increase your speed, duration, and the distance you are running.
- Practice healthy living habits such as maintaining a healthy weight, eating a well-balanced diet, and getting adequate sleep.
- Avoid running when you are overly tired, sick, or in pain.
- Run in well-lit areas to avoid accidents such as stepping into a pothole or rut.
- Run on even surfaces such as a track.
- Maintain proper form while running.
- Strengthening exercises for the hip, knee, and lower leg may help reduce the chance of injury and pain.

Sources:

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