

A Guide to Preventing and Treating Injuries



H2 HEALTH

Running is a wonderful form of exercise. It's a great way to stay healthy and fit, and can lead to a longer, healthier, and happier life.

But when it comes to injuries, runners can be very susceptible. Various studies show that anywhere from 40% to 80% of runners sustain an injury every year. Now that's a lot of injuries!

The thing is, running does not have to be dangerous. By sticking to few basic rules, you can give yourself a good chance at staying injury free, which will keep you on your feet and off the couch.

Most common running injuries

The majority of running injuries occur from either overuse, or a biomechanical flaw. Knowing the most common injuries and how to avoid them can be vital in preventing injuries. Here's a list of some of the most common running injuries, and how to prevent them.

1) **Runner's knee** is characterized by a dull, aching pain under or around the front of the kneecap (patella) where it connects with the lower end of the thighbone (femur).

How to prevent:

- **Stretch.** Begin with a five-minute warm up, and follow that with some light stretching exercises.
- **Wear proper shoes.** Buy shoes that have good shock absorption, and buy a new pair if they are getting old.
- **Run on a softer surface.** This will help prevent a litany of injuries. Avoid sidewalks. Try to find a trail with hard packed dirt to run on. Running on grass is another option, but be wary of divots in the ground.

Treatment:

- Talk to your physical therapist about it. Runner's knee can sometimes be treated with stretching, ice, and a strengthening regimen. Sometimes, orthotics are helpful.

2) Shin Splints are characterized by pain along or just behind the tibia (shinbone), the large bone in the front of the lower leg. Anyone who has suffered from shin splints knows that they can be extremely unpleasant.

How to prevent:

- Switch to a running shoe that is thicker and will absorb shock better. Orthotics may also help with the biomechanics of your foot.
- Make sure to stretch out your calf muscles before and after running.

Treatment:

- **Don't push it.** If you are in a good amount of pain, stop running.
- **Apply ice** to the area.
- Take an anti inflammatory drug such as Advil.
- Talk to your physical therapist about treatment options if pain subsists.

3) Plantar Fasciitis occurs when the strong band of tissue that supports the arch of your foot becomes irritated and inflamed. It is characterized by pain along the arch of your foot.

How to prevent:

- Plantar Fasciitis can be caused by calf muscles that are too tight. **Stretching** your calves before and after running can help prevent pain.

Treatment:

- **Rest.** Plantar Fasciitis is not something you should run through.
- **Calf, hamstring and plantar fascia stretches.**
- **Physical therapy.** Talk to your physical therapist about setting up a regimen.

4) Achilles Tendonitis is a condition that causes pain along the back of the leg near the heel, and occurs when the Achilles tendon becomes inflamed.

How to prevent:

- **Stretching.** Stretching and strengthening your lower extremity muscles can help take stress off the Achilles tendon.
- Achilles Tendonitis can be brought on by a sudden increase in stress on the tendon.

This is why it is important to **slowly increase** the distance and time of you runs.

Treatment:

- **Icing** the area of discomfort will help alleviate pain.
- **Rest.** Do not run when your tendon is inflamed.
- **Stretching.** As with prevention, stretching your calves and lower extremity will help take stress off your tendon.
- **Talk to a physical therapist** about a strengthening routine.

5) Muscle Pulls are basically small, microscopic muscle tears. They can be very painful, but they are also preventable.

How to prevent:

- Muscle pulls happen when your muscles either aren't flexible enough, or you over exert a specific muscle.

- Stretching and proper warm up is your best way to combat a muscle pull.
- If you haven't run in a while, take it easy. Feel how your body responds to physical activity, and don't push yourself.

Treatment:

- The best treatment for a muscle pull is rest and gentle **stretching**.
- **Be careful** not to go beyond your limit though. And **never bounce** while stretching.
- **Ice** will always help as well.



Credit [mikebaird](#)

Running in the sand

When given the opportunity, running on tightly packed sand can be a great, and fun way to take some stress off your joints.

Tips for injury free running

Following these basic tips will improve your chances of avoiding any serious injury while running.

- 1. Warm up.** Don't jump right into your run. Give your body a chance to adjust to the physical activity and it will thank you for it.
- 2. Cool Down.** Slow down at the end of your run. Catch your breath and let your heart beat normalize.
- 3. Run every other day.** Running every day can put too much stress on your muscles and joints. Take a day off to allow yourself to recover.

4. Stretch.



Credit: [Jennoit](#)

It's true; the benefits of stretching are constantly being debated. What most experts do agree upon is that stretching after a run will benefit you the most.

If you want to play it safe, start your run with a five-minute warm up, followed by a light stretch. At the end of the run, do about 5 minutes of stretching. Doing so will improve your flexibility, which will greatly benefit your body.

5. **Follow the ten percent rule.** The ten percent rule says to never increase your time or mileage by more than 10% per week. This is just a good rule of thumb to prevent overtraining.
6. **Find the right shoe.** A good running shoe can help prevent pain and injuries. Do some research and be aware of any previous conditions i.e. flat feet, plantar fasciitis.
7. Most importantly, **Pay attention to your body.** Forget strict regimens or lofty goals; if you are hurt, stop running. Pay close attention to pain and fatigue. These are signs from your body that you should always adhere to.

What to do next?

If you are suffering from any injuries or persistent pain, talk to a physical therapist. They'll be glad to make an assessment of your injuries, and recommend the best route to recovery.