

Healthy Running

Q. I am a runner and I try to do 1-2 races a year, but I always end up injuring myself. I'm planning to do this year's Chicago Marathon, what can I do to stay healthy, especially as I'm approaching my long runs?

A. Think about this for a moment. It takes the average person about 41,280 strides to complete a marathon. Then you need to factor in the hundreds of miles spent training; average weekly miles ranging from 35-50 miles. Now you can get an idea as to why runners are so prone to overuse injuries. What's more, if you already have an imbalance hiding somewhere in your legs, core, or even upper body, that can become magnified to the point of serious pain and side-lining your training.

As we train, muscles have a tendency to become short and tight, allowing adhesions to accumulate and impede our normal movement patterns causing pain, discomfort and imbalances. Active Release Techniques (ART) and Massage Therapy are designed to release tight muscles and breakdown adhesions. During peak training, it's important to be evaluated by a certified ART provider.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY RUNNING

- 1. Foam Rolling and the Stick:** Investing in a foam roller and/or a stick can help ease tight muscles before running.
- 2. Strengthen Your Core:** Do the McGill Four exercises; the instructions for the exercises can be viewed at www.chicagochirosports.com/exercises.html.
- 3. Add Miles Slowly:** Make sure you don't add miles on too

quickly; you need to allow your body time to adapt to the increase mileage. In general, you can add a mile for every run you do per week, provided you then run at least two weeks at the new level before advancing again. For instance if you run 5 times a week, you can add 5 miles the next time you increase your weekly miles.

4. Get back to nature: Trail running is a great way to add variety to your training. When running on uneven terrain, your core, hips, legs and ankles have to work harder to stabilize because each step is slightly different.

5. Read about running: Subscribe to Runner's World Magazine, read Hal Higdon's Marathon Training Guide or read Born to Run to help get more ideas to try out. Even try Paleo Diet for Athletes or even Lance Armstrong's It's Not About the Bike

6. Cross-train: Join a soccer league, Cross-Fit gym, or lift weights. You could even try swimming and cycling. Who knows you may find you like doing triathlons too.

7. Contrast Showers: When cleaning up after training, try showering for 2 minutes with the temperature as cold as you can stand. Then do 2 minutes of warm water. Repeat one time and then end with 3 minutes of cold water. The combination of hot and cold helps to flush metabolic wastes out of your muscles and nutrients into them, leading to faster recovery times.

8. Invest in Your Shoes: Buy new shoes every 300-400 miles, even if they don't look worn. The average shoe life is about 300 miles. Buy two pair of shoes with a similar last, and

wear on alternative days. It's better for your feet and legs not to wear the same shoes for running day in and day.

9. Hill Sprints/Bleachers: Warm-up and stretch for 10 minutes then perform 6-10 repeats of running up a hill or up and down a set of bleachers. Go hard and keep these workouts short.

10. Rest and Eat Right: Perhaps the most important one of all. Get eight hours of sleep each night and incorporate rest days into your schedule. Not giving your body adequate time to heal and recover between workouts is a surefire way to overtraining and overuse injuries. It is also very important that you are getting the right amount of quality carbs and protein. Your diet should consist of 60% carbohydrates and 15-20% protein.

Good luck with your training!

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