

Top 10 tips to look after your running body

A runner's guide to long-term and injury-free training

If you're a beginner runner, it may be tempting to jump straight into an intensive running programme. However, before you get going, it's important to bear in mind some top running tips to keep you injury free. From keeping well-hydrated during running through to resistance training, here's the Coles Injury Clinics guide to looking after your body while out running.

You're a runner – so your training is predominantly running – yes? Specific training for a specific activity is the best form of training; after all, you wouldn't expect to become a good golfer if you rarely ventured onto the fairways.

However, being able to run injury free week-in, week-out and ensure that you're getting the best out of your training requires more than just running. It requires attention to many other disciplines to maintain strength, flexibility and ward off those dreaded injuries.

So if you want to 'run free' without problems, here are the Coles Injury Clinics top tips on how to look after your running body. Follow these and you will soon be well on the way to enjoyable, long term, injury-free running training.

Running footwear

Our top tip has to be to invest in correct footwear. Tennis shoes with minimal cushioning are definitely a no-no but equally, replacing your running shoes once a millennium is off the agenda too. Good quality, well fitting, functional running shoes are a must and if you only make one investment in running equipment, this one is essential. Depending on your weight and the shoe, modern running shoes will last from 300 to 800 miles and will protect your feet, skeleton and muscles. When purchasing, always visit a specialist running retailer who will be able to advise on models, assess your gait and allow you to test them before you buy.

Stretch your muscles after running

Regular flexibility training is one sure-fire way to ward off muscle pulls and strains. The repetitive nature of running causes muscles to shorten and tighten – which flexibility training will prevent. Ideally, stretch all the major leg muscles after every session but if that proves too time consuming, focus on 10 minutes quality stretching twice a week after your run. Think of it as training that will enhance your running and keep you running long-term, rather than a chore that is taking up valuable running time.

Get a sports massage to boost your running

Probably one of the most underrated tools available to runners is using the services of a good sports masseur – regularly. Running causes micro damage to the muscles which if left untreated, can eventually result in a build-up of scar tissue and injury. Factor in the stresses of racing and the problem is compounded. It's no coincidence that professional runners will spend many hours on the sports massage couch as part of their programme to

keep the body in peak condition. After a race or every couple of months, treat yourself to a full leg massage, which will flush away toxins, realign muscle fibres and help ensure that you can continue running week-in, week-out.

Brian Cole