

RUNNING TIPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



AOSSM SPORTS TIPS

Running is a great form of exercise, recreation, and sport participation for adults, children, and adolescents. Whether running alone or in a team environment, running, when done properly, can enhance physical fitness, coordination, a sense of accomplishment, as well as physical and emotional development.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT I MIGHT HAVE A RUNNING INJURY?

Signs that you may be injured or need to alter or stop your running:

- Pain or discomfort while running
- Pain or discomfort after running
- Pain at rest
- Can't sleep
- Limping
- Short of breath easily (exercise asthma)
- Stiffness
- Headaches during or after running
- Dizziness or light headed feeling any time

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON RUNNING INJURIES?

Running injuries in kids are relatively common and may include:

- Knee injuries — kneecap pain, tendonitis
- Lower leg pain — shin splints, stress fractures, calf problems
- Foot and ankle injuries — ankle sprain, heel pain, plantar fasciitis (bottom of foot pain), toe injuries
- Pelvic and hip injuries — muscle pulls, growth plate stress injuries, tendonitis, groin pain, buttock pain
- Heat injuries — sunburn, dehydration, heat exhaustion and possibly stroke
- Trouble sitting
- Trouble climbing stairs
- Can't feel fingers or toes
- Weakness
- Irritated skin
- Blisters
- Foot or leg pain

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STOP RUNNING IF I'M HURT?

Pushing through pain just makes the problem worse, which will keep you out of running for a long time.

Stopping when there is a problem and correcting it, gets you back running again in the shortest, safest amount of time.

Whenever there is a problem, contact your doctor immediately for proper diagnosis and treatment. Most of the time, problems are easily fixed, if attended to quickly.

HOW CAN I PREVENT RUNNING INJURIES?

Prior to beginning your running program:

- Talk about running with a coach or a knowledgeable adult runner
- Read information in a specialized running magazine or Web site
- Become acquainted with a local running club or talk with a high school running coach

Plan running goals together:

- Children and parents should consistently discuss what the goals of the running program are
- Determine the reason (goal) you are running (fitness, recreation, training, competition, etc.)
- Develop a running plan and strategy which is compatible with your goal and your current level of fitness
- Set safe achievable goals and advance slowly and cautiously

Prepare a training plan:

- Hydrate (water) well in advance of running — run on a full tank to avoid dehydration
- Stretch for 5 minutes before beginning
- Start off walking
- Speed up slowly
- When ending, slow down for a few minutes
- Finish off by walking until your heart rate slows to a normal rate
- Stretch for 3 minutes when finished
- Drink more water — fill the tank back up

Use proper running attire:

The local running store is a good place to start and ask questions. It's important to remember the following:

- Light weight, breathable clothing prevents perspiration build up and allows for better body heat regulation
- Running hats, head covers, and ear covers shield the sun but allow temperature regulation. They are also excellent for cold weather to avoid frostbite
- Proper fitting and proper thickness socks help avoid blisters and irritations
- Proper shoes with good support arches should fit well and be comfortable
- Inspect your shoes before running; If they have worn thin or are angled, purchase new shoes
- Orthotic shoe inserts (commercial off the shelf or custom made) are especially valuable for people with flat feet, high arched feet, unstable ankles, or foot problems
- If running in rainy climates, wear waterproof, breathable gear
- Wear gloves in cold weather

Select safe locations and times to run:

- Flat ground is more gentle on the body than hills
- Avoid steep hills
- Avoid banked streets (running on uneven surfaces)
- All purpose track surfaces (high school track) are ideal — especially for beginners
- Avoid busy streets
- Avoid streets without sidewalks
- Running in daylight is preferable to running in the dark
- Stay in well-lit areas (schools, public streets)
- Always run with a partner (preferably a teen or parent)
- Avoid night running
- A parent should always know:
 - where you are running
 - when you are running
 - how far you are running
 - with whom you are running
 - when you expect to be back
 - when you are done

- Use a bag to carry a cell phone with you
- Avoid using head phones, especially if you are running on the street (so you can hear traffic and warning sounds)
- Do not pet stray or strange animals
- Do not stop to talk to strangers

Run in safe weather conditions:

Children and adolescents cannot tolerate the heat extremes that adults can, making them more susceptible to heat and cold injuries. Prevent heat illnesses (sunburn, dehydration, exhaustion, stroke) or cold injuries (frostbite) by monitoring the weather conditions.

Avoid running if:

- Temperatures are over 90 degrees
- High humidity conditions are present
- Cold or freezing temperatures are present

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