

Common Running Injuries

Are you suffering?

Runners may put themselves at risk for injury without even knowing it. There are common running injuries, pain points, and form issues runners experience that can be resolved prior to occurrence. **Physical therapists** can help reduce risk of injury and improve racing performance with adjustments of muscle imbalances, inefficiencies and/or misalignments.

- 1** Female runners are more likely to experience hip pain and should speak with their physical therapist about proper running technique, which may improve hip alignment and control. Imbalances at the hip can cause iliotibial band syndrome, which appears as pain on the outside of the knee.
- 2** Knees are the number one site of injury for runners. In fact, anterior knee injuries make up 20 percent of all runner injuries.⁴
- 3** Patellofemoral syndrome, or runner's knee, is often a result of over striding. When over striding, the foot lands too far from the body causing the leg to take on unnecessary stress that can injure the knee. Shortening the stride can reduce sharp heel strikes to lessen stress.
- 4** The most common sites of injury are different for runners over age 40. The achilles tendon and calf are more vulnerable, and runners may experience an increase in soft tissue injuries.
- 6** Feet are complex. Achilles tendinitis, plantar fasciitis and over pronation are all sources of discomfort for many runners. The correct footwear can help in many situations, but this isn't a cure-all. Exercise has been shown to have a beneficial effect on common running injuries, even for the foot.
- 7** Stress fractures are common in runners under age 30. They are often the cause of pain in the second metatarsal, the longest bone in the foot that stems out to the second toe. A University of Delaware study⁵ conducted by physical therapist Irene Davis, PT, PhD, found that runners who were cued to "run softly" reduced force to their legs by 30 to 50 percent, greatly reducing the likelihood of a stress fracture.

What pain is normal and what is cause for alarm?

Muscle soreness that eases as you run can be normal. However, pain you should be concerned about may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Ⓡ Pain that does not subside within several hours after running.
- Ⓡ On a pain scale of 1-10 (10 being worse pain), pain that exceeds 3 while running.
- Ⓡ The onset of sharp pain.
- Ⓡ Pain that wakes you up at night.
- Ⓡ Persistent pain that worsens when you run.
- Ⓡ Pain that persists in the same area, every time you run.

Does any of this sound familiar? A **physical therapist** can help determine the cause of the problem and recommend effective cross training exercises, identify when poor form may be contributing to your pain, and prescribe necessary changes in training to allow the body to repair itself. A physical therapist can help you become a stronger and smarter runner, which in the long term can help you prevent injury.

**All treatments require a physician's referral.*

1. Taunton JE, Ryan MB, Clement DB, McKenzie DC, Lloyd-Smith DR, Zumbo BD. A prospective study of running injuries: the Vancouver Sun Run 'In Training' clinics. *Br J Sports Med.* 2003;37:239-44.
2. Crowell HP, Milner CE, Hamill J, Davis, I. Reducing impact loading during running with the use of real-time visual feedback. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2010;40(4):206-213, Epub 12 March 2010.