CARING for RUNNING FEET

Runners often ignore one of the most important aspects of their training essentials… their feet. If a runner does not take proper care of these running tools, their feet may be prone to a wide array of problems. A physical therapist can help treat and/or prevent these foot problems by analyzing impaired biomechanics and running styles and addressing weaknesses and movement limitations.

Why are feet so important?

- Feet provide your base - they play an important role in balance and support.
- Feet absorb shock – their flexibility helps to minimize impact when the foot hits the ground.
- Feet propel you forward – in addition to its role as a flexible "shock absorber," the foot stiffens at a certain point in the running cycle to help move you forward.

Are you at risk for injury?

- Low arches: Flat feet often do not have enough support and allow too much mobility, which may cause pain on the inside of the knee or ankle, or pain in the arch near the heel (plantar fasciitis).
- High arches: A high arch usually is too stiff and is very poor at absorbing forces from running. Poor shock absorption often leads to pain in the arch and heel (plantar fasciitis), and can precede low back pain, hip, and/or knee pain.

What can you do to reduce risk of injury?

- Proper shoe choice is essential.
- Begin slowly and gradually increase your distance and speed
- Do not ignore pain and/or discomfort. Address any problems immediately to avoid a permanent or recurring problem.
- Pay attention to your running surfaces. If your goal is to run on uneven terrain, a multitude of hills, or repetitively hard surfaces, be sure to train accordingly and build up slowly.
- Incorporate cross-training into your regular exercise routine to avoid overuse injuries

How can a physical therapist help?

Physical therapists are experts in analyzing a body's structure, alignment and movement. For foot pain, one may expect a physical therapist to perform the following:

- Perform a detailed examination of your foot and how it relates to your body.
- Analyze your walking and running style.
- Recommend appropriate shoes and/or orthotics, if needed.
- Recommend modifications to your training routine.
- Recommend specific exercises to increase strength and muscle balance.

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