



SAINT FRANCIS SPORTS MEDICINE

Making athletes of all ages BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER since 1995.

- ⊕ Novice Runners Can Avoid Injury with These Simple Tips
- ⊕ Proper Hydration Helps Optimize Running Performance
- ⊕ Prevention is the Key to Blister Success

Follow These Strategies to Avoid Novice Running Injuries

It seems almost ludicrous to think a little running can result in a big injury. After all, we've been running around in one form or another since we were little kids, right?

While that's true to an extent, distance running exerts a higher level of stress on the body than playing tag. The consequences of overdoing it can be frustrating for beginning runners at any age or fitness level.



Tonya Rinda, PT
Senior Physical Therapist

"It is important to understand the benefits of easing your way into a running routine," said Tonya Rinda, PT, senior physical therapist at Saint Francis Healthcare System. "As tempting as it is to ramp up your mileage quickly, your body will respond better to a gradual buildup and you will be able to enjoy this exercise option beyond the short term."

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Overuse injuries are the primary culprits when it comes to running injuries. They can include lower extremity injuries such as shin splints, stress fractures and even blisters. Here are some simple strategies for minimizing your risk for developing injuries:

Get Shoes Made for Running – Shoe companies have invested a lot into researching effective shoe designs, so you might as well take advantage of it. Be sure to find a shoe that fits your running style and foot shape, and avoid shoes designed for other activities.

Start Out Slowly – Don't worry about setting any world records right out of the gate. Let your body gradually get used to running for longer periods before having time become a consideration.

Understand the Mind's Role – Getting in shape and learning to run faster or farther is as much about physical training as it is mental training. Learning how much you can push your body and still be OK is part of the process, and it takes time.

Recovery is Part of Training – Especially when you are just getting into running, rest days are critical as your body recovers from a level of activity to which it is unaccustomed. Use the day off to do some other type of physical activity, such as core work, strength conditioning or even biking.

Build Weekly Mileage Slowly – The general rule is to limit your weekly mileage increases to 10 percent. Your body will need time to acclimate to the increased energy demands of running, and slowly building up your mileage tolerance is a proven success strategy.

Keep a Training Log – This keeps your head in the game and helps you track your progress. Include notes such as miles run, weather, how you felt and even elapsed time once that becomes an appropriate metric.



Stretch, Stretch, Stretch – Runners are notoriously poor with flexibility, but it doesn't have to be the case. Work a regular stretching routine into your day, whether you will be running that day or not. Keep shin splits away by strengthening your lower legs. Walk barefoot around the house, first just on your toes, then the heels, then the outsides of your feet and finally the insides of your feet.

Change Up Your Surfaces – Concrete, asphalt and other hard surfaces can take a toll on your legs, especially your shins. Mix in some trail running, grass and other softer surfaces to change the physical and mental aspect of training.

Set Achievable Goals – Nothing creates frustration faster than setting an unattainable goal and then failing to reach it. Realize that getting into running shape is a process and celebrate the small victories along the way.

For more tips for new runners, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Healthcare System at 573-331-5153.

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Optimize Your Running with Proper Hydration Strategies

Runners tend to be a mentally strong group of athletes, pushing through discomfort to test their mettle against themselves and the clock. Paying attention to details such as proper hydration isn't always a high priority, however.

Of the primary fuel components your body needs for efficient performance, hydration features the most variables. Temperature, body type, individual sweat tendencies and humidity all factor into a runner's hydration equation.

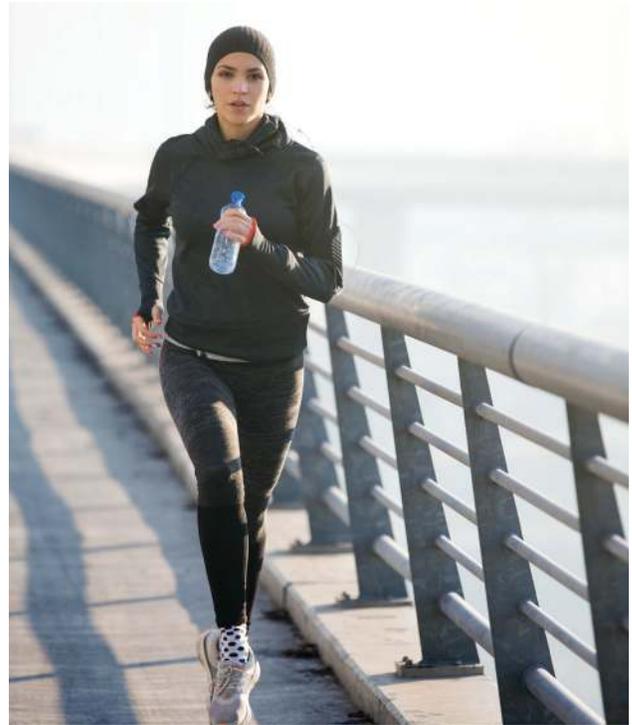


Rob Bunger, ATC, CEAS
Senior Athletic Trainer

“Hydration is the detail most likely to take a back seat for new and experienced runners,” said Rob Bunger, ATC, CEAS, senior athletic trainer at Saint Francis Healthcare System. “That’s unfortunate, because there are a lot of physiological functions that depend on an adequate supply of fluids for efficient operation.”

The body depends on having an adequate supply of fluids for everything from brain function to the ability to cool itself. Proper hydration is not limited to the time leading up to your run. It actually should be a focal point throughout the day, every day.

“Experienced runners know they should begin increasing their fluid intake the day before a big race rather than that morning, especially for longer runs in which you may not have easy access to fluids along the way,” Bunger said. “Keeping your body fully hydrated and balanced with sufficient electrolytes throughout the day is a good practice to follow.”



What Are Electrolytes?

Electrolytes are the other half of the hydration equation challenge. Minerals and substances such as potassium, calcium and magnesium are carried by the bloodstream and produce an electrically charged solution when dissolved in water. They are vitally important for body function, and dehydration can cause electrolyte imbalance.

The kidneys and several hormones regulate electrolyte levels, which can sway out of balance when water levels in the body change. Symptoms of electrolyte imbalance include fatigue, diarrhea, muscle spasms, weakness, blood pressure changes and even seizures.

It is for this reason that distance runners often carry electrolyte-rich sports drinks and foods with them when tackling long runs. Carrying nutrition typically is not necessary for short distances or easy workouts, provided the body has sufficient levels of fluids and electrolytes on board before you start.

For more information about proper hydration for runners, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Healthcare System at 573-331-5153.

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Don't Let Blisters Rub You the Wrong Way

Blisters are a common source of discomfort for athletes at every level, especially those who are new to an activity or level of training. Taking steps to minimize the potential for blister development is the best way to win that battle.

Blisters develop when friction causes the top two layers of skin to separate and the body fills the void with fluid. They can occur on the balls of the feet for tennis players and runners, on the hands for baseball players and golfers, even on the side of a single finger for a pitcher.



Rob Bunger, ATC, CEAS
Senior Athletic Trainer

“Nerve endings that become exposed when not protected by two healthy layers of skin create a painful response that is difficult to ignore,” said Rob Bunger, ATC, CEAS, senior athletic trainer at Saint Francis Healthcare System. “Minimizing the opportunities for friction to occur is the best preventive strategy for most athletes.”

Prevention Strategies

The need for proper-fitting shoes seems obvious, but it is the most common reason behind blister development for many athletes. Eliminating excess sliding – and thus, friction – is the goal of any blister prevention strategy, and an extra pair of socks can go a long way toward achieving that goal.

Likewise, wearing two pairs of gloves can help prevent blisters on the hands and fingers, and bandages have long been used by distance runners to prevent nipple irritation.



Treatment of Blisters

Despite your best efforts, blisters still might develop and require extra attention. It is important to seek treatment from a certified athletic trainer before you catch yourself altering your stride or technique because of favoring the afflicted area. Introducing infection into an open wound is the biggest danger in self-treating blisters.

“Improperly draining a blister can make matters worse,” Bunger said. “It is worth the extra effort to consult a professional to ensure you are using proper hygiene to enhance the healing process.”

For more information about blister care, please call the Sports Medicine team at Saint Francis Healthcare System at 573-331-5153.