

Preventing Running Injuries



Facts and Safety
Tips for Running

For further information contact

Smartplay – Sports Medicine Australia

To contact Smartplay in your state visit www.smartplay.com.au or www.sma.org.au

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References

For a full list of references, contact Smartplay.

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Other safety tips

- Running is not an appropriate form of exercise for those who are heavily overweight, have significant skeletal malalignment, unstable hips, spinal stress fractures or knee cartilage damage.
- Access professional guidance from a running coach at your local athletics club. Not only can your technique and fitness improve, but you will also meet like-minded individuals to run with. Contact Athletics Australia to find your local club and coach.

If an injury occurs

- Rest or modify your activity to allow overuse injuries to heal and inflammation to subside.
- Gradually return to running (10% increase in distance per week) once flexibility, strength and endurance have returned.
- If you suffer severe or continuing pain, swelling or loss of motion, seek medical attention from a sports medicine professional.



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Facts on running injuries

Running has one of the largest participation rates. Statistics from the Australian Sports Commission's 2006 survey showed an estimated 1,224,100 Australians aged 15 years and older participated in running in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. Running is a popular fitness activity because of its health benefits, affordability and convenience. However running can cause injuries, often due to overtraining – people doing too much, too soon.

How many injuries?

- Up to 70% of recreational and competitive runners sustain overuse injuries during any 12-month period.

The causes and types of injuries

- 42% of all running injuries are to the knee, followed by 17% to the foot/ankle, 13% to the lower leg and 11% to the hip/pelvis.
- Overuse injuries can occur from training errors (running frequency, duration, distance, speed and lack of leg strength and flexibility) and inappropriate surfaces, terrain and footwear.
- Overuse injuries, as a result of training errors, are more common than acute injuries such as ligament and muscle sprains and strains.
- The most common overuse injuries are patellofemoral pain syndrome (runner's knee), iliotibial band friction syndrome, plantar fasciitis, meniscal injuries, tibial stress syndrome and patellar tendinopathy.
- Reducing the distance, frequency and duration of your run can prevent injury.

Safety tips for running

Good preparation is important

- Before running, see a professional to identify potential musculoskeletal and health problems that may contribute to injury.
- Always warm up and cool down by jogging slowly.
- Injured runners should consult a professional about how to prevent re-injury.
- Hydrate prior to running and consider taking water on longer runs.

Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Avoid doing too much too soon. Establish a graduated training program. Allow 24–48 hours rest and recovery between running sessions. Cross training, cycling or swimming can be done on 'rest' days.
- Start slowly at a pace where you can have a conversation without breathlessness.
- Gradually build up running speed and distance (no more than 10% per week).
- Cut down if you experience pain. Pain is a sign that the body is not adapting to the exercise load.
- Include lower leg strength and flexibility exercises in your training program.
- Avoid running when you are tired and at the hottest part of the day. Schedule runs for early morning or late afternoon and run in the shade, if possible.
- Drink water or a sports drink before, during and after running.

Check running surface

- Run on a clear, smooth, even and reasonably soft surface. Avoid uneven surfaces, sand and concrete.
- Gradually introduce surface changes.



Wear the right protective equipment

- Wear shoes specifically designed for running that match your foot type. When buying new shoes, have them fitted by a professional and take your old ones with you so the salesperson can identify where your shoes wear the most.
- Wear light clothing, sunscreen and a hat to protect against sunburn.
- Wear reflective clothing so you are visible to motorists.
- Use a head torch when running where there are no streetlights.

Personal safety

- Always tell someone where you are going, your exact route and how long you will be.
- If using an iPod or headset, do not have the music too loud – stay alert and aware.
- Carry identification, a whistle, a mobile phone or loose change for public payphones. Know the location of public payphones on your usual route/s.
- Choose well-lit, populated routes and avoid dangerous and isolated areas.
- Whenever possible run with a partner, in a group or with a dog.