

Basic Tips for Staying Injury Free

Running and walking are great forms of exercise, but like all forms of physical activity, there is a threat of injury. Here are some basic tips for safe exercise:

1. Be aware of proper body alignment — the best way to determine whether you are properly aligned is to ask, "Does this movement feel comfortable?"
2. Avoid "locking" out the joints during a movement.
3. Breathe normally — you should never feel as though you cannot catch your breath.
4. Allow adequate rest in between exercise sessions.
5. Avoid exercise if you feel any unusual pain or discomfort.
6. Don't over do it when starting out; build up gradually.
7. Wear proper shoes.
8. Stretch after exercise.

Two of the most common injuries from running and walking are runner's knee and shin splints. Here is some basic information about each common injury. If you are experiencing these or any other persistent injuries, it is best to see a doctor.

Runner's Knee

What it is: Persistent pain just below the kneecap due to inflammation and a gradual softening of the cartilage underneath it. This softening is usually caused by overuse or by the way the foot lands during running.

Symptoms: Slight knee pain during activity that gradually gets worse over time until the runner is forced to see a doctor.

Treatment: One form of treatment is icing the knee for 15 minutes twice a day, especially after activity. Aspirin and Ibuprofen are another short term solution. A long term treatment is orthotics, shoe inserts that are specially molded for your foot. Orthotics ensure that your foot strikes the ground correctly, thus eliminating undue stress on your knees.

Prevention: The best prevention is to avoid over-training, especially if you are feeling pain in your knees. Also, be sure to have pair of good running shoes that aren't worn out. Many running specialty stores have the ability to analyze your running gait and recommend a running shoe that will minimize your risk of injury.

Shin Splints

What it is: A severe burning pain in the lower part of the shins. The pain is caused by small tears in the leg muscles at the point of attachment to the shin. These tears are caused by the muscles in the back of the leg placing excessive stress on the muscles in the front of the leg.

Symptoms: The pain can start out as a burning sensation during activity or a dull ache after activity. The pain may become more intense if the condition is ignored.

Treatment: Icing the affected area after activity and taking aspirin and ibuprofen are good short-term treatments. The best remedy, however, is rest; try reducing your activity for seven to 10 days. Never run through the pain, as this will only worsen the condition.

Prevention: Limiting your running and proper running shoes are excellent ways to prevent this painful condition. Should you have to ease off on your running, some good substitutes are swimming, elliptical training or biking. Be sure to stretch often.

These tips are meant for informational purposes only. The information provided here is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.



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