



Runners High

Even the busiest executives can find time for exercise – and many people love to run not only for the fitness – but for the enjoyment. Not only is running considered to be one of the most efficient ways to improve cardiovascular fitness, balance and muscle tone as you age, it's also easy to fit into even the craziest of schedules.

Runners also cite the pleasure of exploring new areas and getting a daily dose of fresh air. Unfortunately, running is also one of the easiest ways to get injured because most people fail to adjust their training routine to body changes caused by age or injury or even physical changes such as weight gain.

"Runners don't want to stop running, and the good news is that you can run through most pain without causing permanent damage," says Lewis G. Maharam, MD, medical director of the New York Road Runners Club, the New York City Marathon, NYC Triathlon, the Suzuki Rock 'n' Roll Marathon -- among others. "But," he cautions, "if pain changes your running style, stop and see a sports doctor."

It's important to know that most running injuries can be prevented because they are caused by overtraining, overuse or a biomechanical flaw in body structure and motion. To manage adjustments, injuries are generally categorized by the different parts of the body generally impacted – hips, knees, legs, ankles and foot. Within each category, people experience multiple types of injuries – many of which include stress fractures of the bones, inflammation and tears of muscles and general sprains and strains. Most injuries are relatively easy to avoid – but do require regular attention.

First, don't over-train. Push yourself at a slow and manageable pace – about 10 percent increase in distance per week is recommended. Second, wearing the right footwear is essential. Since everyone has a different gait, have your shoes fitted at a specialty runner's store. Most will fit the shoes for no charge, and you should replace shoes every 350 -500 miles. Running surfaces are important too. Choose trails such as sand, grass or dirt to run on which will help absorb shock instead of passing it on to your legs. Find paths with slow curves and straight paths to minimize injuries caused by tight turns. Most importantly, include cross training and stretching in your exercise schedule. Injuries often happen because one part of your body is stronger than another which will cause the weaker muscle to become injured. Balance exercises are also critical to ensure your core muscles are



strong and will maintain proper form. Yoga and other stretching exercises can ensure muscles are lengthened and flexible. If you do get injured, take your time to heal. Start with water running, cycling, or an elliptical trainer and add muscle building exercises to re-balance.

If you are just starting an exercise program that includes running, or have been running for a while and experiencing injuries, contact a physician at Executive MD for recommendations about your fitness and injury prevention program.

By John Mamana, M.D.

John Mamana, M.D.
Executive MD
John@ExecutiveMD.com
703-260-6455