

## <sup>1</sup>Common Injuries (and what to do about them)

*Some injuries will definitely require the diagnosis and treatment advice from medical experts. This is a very brief mention of some of the ailments that we can experience as runners. If you're not sure what's causing your pain, try not to self-diagnose. Seek guidance from your doctor, a physio or a biomechanics specialist.*

### **Blisters!!**

Ouch! We've all had them and running probably means you'll experience them more. Blisters are caused by repetitive friction on an area, which also causes chaffing – another runner's nemesis.

Wet or uncomfortable shoes, socks, or other clothing can be a cause of friction, as can hot, swollen feet rubbing against the insides of shoes.

An anti-blister or anti-chaffing stick can work wonders at the first hint of rubbing and to prevent further complications, especially if it is somewhere you know you've experienced it before.

If the blister has started to form then a good quality blister plaster that sucks out excess moisture, cushions the area and forms a 'second skin' that allows the skin to grow beneath it prevent it from getting worse and alleviate some of the pain that might have started.

Ideally don't let the blister form - try to catch it before it develops and apply the stick. If you're beyond that point pop the plaster on at your earliest chance. Don't leave it until it gets too painful.

*The following injuries and treatments are described for information only. If you have an injury that's causing you pain, please seek proper medical advice.*

### **Runner's Knee (Patellar Tendonitis)**

This injury presents as swelling and pain in the knee, usually above the kneecap, but sometimes below it.

This is often caused by hip or ankle stiffness or imbalance.

To prevent it avoid running too far, too fast and by greatly changing the terrain you usually run on.

Work on your running form.

Be sure to build up muscles and flexibility by weekly strength training and mobility. Work on strengthening your Quadriceps, Hamstrings, Calves, Glutes and Core. Get someone to check your gait and let you know if you're running hunched over, if you're rolling your foot inwards (supination) or outwards (pronation), flat-footed or throwing your hip out. Get them to watch <sup>2</sup>from the front and see if your knees land in line with your foot, or do they collapse in? If you suspect your form is 'off' seek advanced advice from a physio or other Biomechanics expert.

Recommended treatment for Runner's Knee can be to scale down your running for at least 2 weeks, depending on how much pain you're experiencing (with complete rest if you're experiencing pain whilst walking).

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Foam roll your Quads and Hip Flexors and stretch your ankles to take some of the stress off the knee joint.

### **Plantar Fasciitis**

This painful condition is caused by an overloading of the tissues at the bottom of the foot

Whilst poor form can be a common cause, poor balance can also be an issue. Increasing distance can set off the problem due to the increased time on feet, especially if you are suffering with the aforementioned conditions.

Add balance sessions to your workouts, integrating single leg exercises, such as single leg deadlifts or balancing on one foot. Try rolling a tennis ball under your foot to improve circulation.

Improving cadence – shortening your stride – can help improve your form and decrease the load on your feet. The typical recommendation is 160-180 steps per minute.

### **Shin Splints**

This is usually felt on the outside of the shin, which is the tibialis anterior muscle. It can sometimes become inflamed which causes further pain. If it does cause a great deal of discomfort, make sure you visit a doctor to rule out a stress fracture of your fibula.

Strengthening the muscle between runs will help; pull your toes away from your body.

You *can* run with shin splints, depending on the severity of your pain, it's a good idea to not run so far that it becomes very uncomfortable. If you're limping whilst running, take it down to a walk until it feels better.

There isn't one definitive cause, but cadence may play a part – keep your strides short (but not tiny). Again, single leg exercises might also prevent the injury.

### **IT Band Syndrome (Iliotibial Band)**

The IT band runs from your hip to the outside of your knee, and this injury can be caused by over-use and inflammation. It usually presents as a hip or knee issue. It might be that an ankle isn't mobile enough, so the knee turns inwards, therefore the muscles further up the leg have to work extra hard to pull the knee and hip back in line and stabilize the knee. It can feel like it's always under tension.

<sup>3</sup>There can be multiple causes, so the best idea is to improve joint mobility through Pilates, yoga or other flexibility sessions. Also incorporate balance into your sessions and be conscious of your form when running.

You may need to see a doctor, physio or biomechanics specialist to determine what's causing your ITB pain.

### **Hip Pain**

As long as actual damage to the hip is ruled out (e.g. Osteo-arthritis) painful hips can be caused by tight muscles, and the hips especially feel the effects of repetitive motion.

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<sup>3</sup> TrainedbyFaye September 2020

The problem can also be caused by an impingement (excessively tight muscles) or bursitis (the swelling of a fluid filled sac designed to decrease friction in the joint).

Other causes can be, as discussed earlier, an imbalance further down the leg that forcing the hip to behave incorrectly due to other joints pulling on muscles surrounding the hip to stabilize or make up for their failings.

Mobility could be your best friend, along with stability exercises. Pilates and strength-training combined could be ideal. Work should certainly include glute bridges, Lunges and Isometric holds.

Pinpoint the cause of your pain (professional advice may be required), then rest and modify your training. Possibly adjust your running technique and volume.

These are just a few of the most 'popular', but there are numerous other ailments we can suffer from, but few that cannot be remedied with rest and / or improvements to our mobility and balance. Ideally, work on these two skills before injuries begin to rear their ugly heads.

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