

## Stay Injury Free: Interventions for Distance Running

Lynn Gray, M.S., RRCA Running Coach

Many of you are new walkers and joggers and many are seasoned runners who desire to continue distance walk to running for their lifetime rather than for just an event. How does one continue distance walking to jogging to running for a lifetime? *Most people cannot; some people can if the following interventions are done.*

1. Remember running is just **one component of fitness**; runners who **run only** have a time limit before overuse injuries occur; **incorporate cross training** into your week.
2. Remember running is the **opposite of agility**; stiff, tight muscles from the back and down begin to form. A **stretching regiment is necessary** to both balance and gently stretch running muscles they have become tight over time. Without stretching, some muscles and tendons will begin pulling on the bone which causes hairline fractures.
3. Remember running is done more successfully if the **posture is strong and balanced**. A **strong core, back, and hip flexors area** will make your body less dependent on the weaker half of your body which include the knees and below. You are familiar with others getting sidelined due to: shin splints, knee injuries, feet problems, etc. (Note: the knee joint is one of the strongest joints...yet an imbalanced foot strike makes the knee the most imperfect joint)
4. Remember running should not **always be at the same pace**. Most folks go at their daily running to hard resulting in the same foot strike landing pattern. This redundant foot strike results in overuse injuries in the areas of the hip, hamstring, knee, shin, and feet. The **easy running form called "jogging" relieves the forefoot strike since the landing is mostly from heel to toe** which also allows the leg muscles to be stretched and become more developed.
5. Remember running should not be aimed at "**keeping up with the Jones's**". What if you are not rested or you are dangerously close to an injury, etc.? Have a professionally made schedule which plans the rest and recovery days which insures the body as had proper rest. You can always join the Jones's when you are done.
6. Running should not be **done on hard surfaces only**; even when I was in my 30's and 40's I realized soft courses such as the parks allowed me to up my mileage while staying uninjured. The "**country" running style on soft ground** is not only relaxing but more beautiful.
7. Running should be **complimented with a planned monthly, bi-weekly, or if affordable, weekly massage**. The running muscles must be stretched and adhesions broken up or injuries slowly creep up. Massage too expensive? **Try the poor man's massage: Basic, or Restorative Yoga**. Be careful with the advanced yoga since many runners actually overstretch and overdue their knee hinge joint. Combine a basic yoga class with foam roller to keep tight muscles at bay.

8. Running is harder on the body for **those who carry extra pounds**. The joints can only take so much until they get sore, irritated, inflamed then the tendons and ligaments are called on to carry a strong work load. Overworking the tendons can create tendinitis in various areas. Try to learn to **eat light at night**. **Follow a nutrition plan that is just about free of sugar and is low fat**.

**Notation**...I write this based on 45 years of distance running. I have had just about every malady known to man and womankind. However, I learned how to stay in the game by incorporating each of the above into my regiment. Whatever **distance sports** you are in, the training/recovery principles remain the same; just the **name** of the sport changes.

LGray