AMPHIBIAN
TRIATHLON
COACHING

Guide to Common Running Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes at some point during their training and racing. Here are some of the most common running mistakes with ideas on how you can fix them and reduce the risk of running injuries and other issues.

Trainers

Wearing old or the wrong type of running shoes for your feet & running style can lead to running injuries.

The Fix:

Go to a running specialty shop i.e. Up & Running, where knowledgeable people can evaluate your running style and foot type. They can determine whether you're an over-pronator, under-pronator, or neutral runner and they can make shoe recommendations too.

N.B. Once you get the right pair of running shoes, a good rule of thumb is to replace them every 500km-800km, depending on your running style, body weight and the surface on which you run. Lighter runners can get new shoes at the upper end of the recommendation while heavier runners could even start to consider replacement closer to 300km because the loss of cushioning can lead to injuries. Your trainers may look ok, but doesn't mean that they are ok.

Going Too Far, Too Early

Many runners, especially people who are new to running, make this mistake. They get so excited and they increase mileage, too fast, too soon. They believe that "more is better" when it comes to running. As a result, they often start to develop common overuse running injuries, such as shin splints, runner's knee, or ITB syndrome. In some cases, they may get burned out quickly and lose interest in running.

The Fix:

Increase your mileage gradually. Don't let your weekly mileage increase by more than about 10% and pay attention to aches and pains. If the pain gets worse as you run, that's a warning sign that you should stop. Listen to your body for injury warning signs and know when you shouldn't run through pain.
Don't ignore rest days—they're important to recovery and injury prevention. Your muscles build and repair themselves during your rest days. So, if you run every day, you're not going to gain much strength and you may increase your risk of injury.

Over Striding/Run Form

One of the most common injury-causing running form mistakes is overstriding or landing heel first with your foot well ahead of your body's centre of gravity. Some runners assume that a longer stride will improve their speed or running efficiency, but that's not the case. Overstriding wastes energy since it means you're breaking with each foot strike. It could also lead to injuries such as shin splints.

The Fix:

Work on correct running form, this includes landing mid-sole, with your foot underneath your centre of gravity. A short, low arm swing is the key to keeping your stride short and close to the ground. Try to keep your steps light and quick, as if you're stepping on hot coals.

Not Breathing Properly

Some runners are not sure how they should be breathing while running. Breathing is too shallow and can lead to side stitches.

The Fix:

- Make sure you breathe in through both your mouth AND nose. Your muscles need oxygen to keep moving and your nose alone simply can't deliver enough.
- Breathe from your diaphragm, or belly, not your chest—that's too shallow. Deep belly breathing allows you to take in more air, which can also help prevent side stitches.
- Exhale fully, this will remove more carbon dioxide and also help you inhale more deeply.
- As a beginner, try to run at a pace at which you can breathe easily. You should be able to speak in full sentences, without gasping for air. If you can't chat you are going too fast!

Poor Pacing

One of the biggest mistakes is going out too fast at the beginning of a run or race. Most runners have at least one story about a race when they felt good during the first part of the race that they ran ahead of pace, only to crash and burn during the second half.

The Fix:

- The best way to avoid going out too fast is to deliberately run the first km slower than you plan to run the final one. It's difficult to do since you'll most likely feel really strong at the start. But keep in mind that for every second you go out too fast in the first half of your race, you could lose double that amount of time in the second half.
- Don't start a race positioned with faster runners because you'll most likely try to keep up with them.
- Start your race at a comfortable pace and make sure you check your watch at the first km marker. If you're ahead of your anticipated pace, slow down. It's not too late to make pace corrections after just one km.

Poor Nutrition & Hydration

A good diet isn't all about weight management, what you eat as an athlete matters as it fuels your body for training, recovery and performance. If you don't fuel wisely and eat a good balance of nutrients you will not recover well after each training session and won't grow stronger.

What you eat and when you eat matters. A quality diet consisting of a good mix of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals is important.

When you eat is key – timing is everything. You should fuel your body throughout the day, as well as, before, during and after a workout, depending on the length and intensity of the workout. Do not leave too long between eating as it can leave you craving food and you end up over-eating.

Hydration is also important. It aids proper digestion, nutrient absorption and improves performance. If you do not drink enough throughout the day and during workouts you may feel nauseated, have dry lips and throat, or be fatigued; it may also reduce your ability to concentrate at work or complete your workouts. The amount you need to drink varies from person to person, so listen to your body and drink when you feel thirsty.

The Fix:

Plan ahead - as an athlete you spend time and effort planning your races and doing the training; part of that planning should include how you fuel yourself to enhance your training, recovery and performance. British Triathlon has some ideas.

If you plan ahead and know what you will be eating each week it will help you fit everything into your busy schedule and means you won't be tempted to binge eat on your return from a hard workout.

Be smart and plan your diet!

Overtraining

Some runners who are training for specific races or certain goals run too hard, run too many kms and don't allow for adequate recovery time. They assume that running every day will help them get fitter and faster. Overtraining is the leading cause of injury in runners.

The Fix:

- Increase volume gradually.
- Plan "rest weeks" by reducing your volume & intensity every fourth week.
- After a hard run, take a recovery day. Rest days are important for your recovery and performance, recovery is when you get fitter/faster.
- Add some cross-training activities to your schedule. Doing activities other than running prevents boredom, works different muscles, and can give your running muscles and joints a break.

Neglecting the Importance of Strength & Conditioning

Strength training is key to supporting your run training and helps maintain or increase muscle mass, which in turn can improve metabolic rate, functional capacity, fitness and athletic performance.
Strength training is often neglected in favour of getting kilometres under the belt, but has the potential to reduce injury risk by correcting muscle imbalances and improving muscle activation, as well as increasing the efficiency of your running biomechanics which results in improved running performance.

The Fix:

Choose a simple bodyweight strength & conditioning plan to start with and build from there. Try going to British Triathlon for advice or look on our website for a simple S&C plan you can do at home.

Becoming a Coached Athlete

If you would like to learn more or have any questions about becoming a coached athlete please email us https://www.amphibiantriathloncoaching.com/contact-us/

Good luck with your training!