

# Running for beginners

So you've made the decision to start running. Congratulations! It's a great way to improve your health and your quality of life. Like all physical activity, running carries the risk of injury. It's important to know how to prevent and recover from injury.

Runners should concentrate on stretching the calf (gastrocnemius, soleus), thigh (quadriceps, hamstrings), groin (adductors), buttocks (gluteals), hip flexors (rectus femoris, psoas and tensor fascia lata), the iliotibial band (outside of thigh) and back.

The CPA presents its educational references as a public service and for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the CPA membership. To find a physiotherapist, please click on the "Find A Physiotherapist" tab at [www.physiohelp.ca](http://www.physiohelp.ca)

## Stretch!



Stretching can:

- Prepare your body for activity;
- Relax your mind;
- Reduce the risk of muscle injury;
- Restore full mobility after an injury;
- Improve performance in your running;
- Reduce muscle tension; and
- Promote circulation

## Warm up

- Warm up your cardiovascular system by walking for at least five minutes.
- Warm up your joints and muscles by performing dynamic stretching. Slow, controlled movements simulate the functional movements of running. Stretching should never be painful.
- Breathe regularly throughout the warmup.





## Cooldown

When your run is over, take time for a cool down – a brief, relaxed walk.

Spend at least 10 minutes cooling down to help work the metabolic wastes and excess fluid out of your muscles, and to allow your heart rate to slow down gradually.

By the time you stop, your pulse should be within 20 beats-per-minute of your resting heart rate.

## Mind your posture

Running is a great activity to get your whole body in motion, and body posture is an important part of your running technique. Before your run, take a couple of deep breaths to expand your lungs. After you exhale, maintain this position, with shoulders down, relaxed and slightly back. Keep your head up and avoid excessive arm movement while running.

## Reducing strain while running

- Start running at a slow pace if you haven't been active for a period of time. Increase speed as your conditioning improves; or
- Use the run/walk technique – start with a two-minute run/one-minute walk, gradually increasing your run time.
- Increase your distance by 10 per cent each week.
- Your running pace should always allow you to carry on a conversation while you breathe comfortably - this is called the 'talk test'.
- Take time to recover between runs. Rest days are as vital as training days. Rest days give your muscles time to recover and build strength.
- Vary the direction or route you run. Repeating the same course puts strain on the same parts of your body each time you train.
- Eat sensibly and drink plenty of fluids. Get to know the best time for you to eat or drink before running to prevent cramps or nausea. Maintain your level of hydration and on race day do not change your hydration habits.

- Rest – to protect yourself from further injury.
- Ice – to help reduce pain and swelling within the first 48–72 hours after an injury. Note: Ice packs should never be on longer than 10 minutes or more than twice an hour.
- Compression – wrap an elastic bandage around the injured area to control swelling. Wrap the bandage going towards your heart. It should not feel uncomfortably tight.
- Elevation – Use pillows to raise the injured limb above the level of the heart while lying down.

Before you can safely return to running, it is essential to regain strength, flexibility, balance and co-ordination. Consult a physiotherapist for detailed assessment and management of your injury.



If you do experience an injury, you can use the R.I.C.E. steps to reduce pain, minimize internal swelling, and promote healing.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) represents physiotherapists, physiotherapist assistants and physiotherapist students across Canada. CPA members are rehabilitation professionals dedicated to the health, mobility and fitness of Canadians.

Physiotherapists are primary health care professionals who combine their in-depth knowledge of the body and how it works with specialized hands-on clinical skills to assess, diagnose and treat symptoms of illness, injury or disability.

More than 20,000 registered physiotherapists work in Canada, in private clinics, general and rehabilitation hospitals, community health centres, residential care and assisted-living facilities, home visit agencies, workplaces, and schools.

## Physiotherapy can help

A physiotherapist will assess your injury and provide appropriate treatment that will promote an earlier return to running as well as advice on how to prevent recurrence of injury.

Physiotherapists are health care professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical functioning. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help increase mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function.

Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity.