Returning to running after injury

Information and Plan

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17

Return to Running Programme

What is a Return to Running Programme?

A return to running programme is method of gradually re-introducing running and impact activity to allow your body to strengthen and become accustomed to running once again without injuring yourself. Running needs both strength and endurance, which will have deteriorated if you have had any period of rest because of injury. For this reason it is important to build up slowly to allow your body to adapt and develop and prevent re-injury.

When am I ready to start my Return to Running Programme?

Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you when you are ready to return to running, but as a general guide, you should be pain free when fast walking for 30 minutes before starting the return to running programme.

How do I do my Return to Running Programme?

The return to running programme is a structured way of gradually increasing the amount of running you are doing from week to week. It is important that you are ready both to step up when you complete a week without pain, but also to step down a level if you experience pain or other symptoms.

What if I get pain during my Return to Running Programme?

If you experience pain during the programme that does not settle down after reducing the amount of running you are doing, stop running and contact your consultant or physiotherapist. This is particularly important if you have had a stress fracture.

What is the structure of my Return to Running Programme?

This generic return to running programme which can be adapted to individuals depending on their injury and fitness level. This can be used as a guide

Week 1: Jog 1 min/walk 1 min for total 30mins. Repeat this every other day.
Week 2: Jog 2 mins/walk 1 min for total 30 mins. Repeat this every other day.
Week 3: Jog 4 mins/walk 1 min for total 30mins. Repeat this every other day.
Week 4: Jog 9 mins/walk 1 min for total 30mins. Repeat this every other day.
Week 5: Jog 15 mins/walk 1 min. Repeat every other day.
Week 6: Jog 30 mins continuously. Repeat every other day.

Week 7 onwards: You are ready to develop the duration and intensity of your running. We do not recommend increasing the duration or intensity of your sessions by more than 10% per week. For example if you successfully run for 30 minutes one week you should run for 33 minutes the next week.

General tips for running:

- Run every other day when returning from an injury, to allow your body to adapt to the impact exercise
- Increase the duration or intensity of your runs by10% per week; don't increase both in the same week
- Have at least one rest day per week
- Varying your type of exercise is a useful way of improving your fitness and preventing injury. Try adding in some cycling, cross training, stepping or class based exercise to supplement your running.
- If you want to increase your running distance or time, only increase this by 10% each week.
- Renew your trainers every 300 to 500 miles. Consider having two pairs of trainers 'on the go' at the same time.
- Vary your training. Combine different speeds, distances and times during your training period.
- Remember to keep up your strength and conditioning exercises even when you are back to running. So use the gym or try pilates/body pump etc.