

# Track and field injury prevention



## What do you need to know about track and field injuries?

About 50 percent of young track and field athletes have some sort of injury. Over-use injuries are most common. Increasing knowledge and awareness about running is important. Athletes, along with coaches and parents, can help prevent injuries.

### What are common track and field injuries?

- Muscle strains are pain from torn muscle fibers. This can happen any place in the leg.
- Shin splints can be caused by injury to muscles or may even be tiny stress fractures in the lower leg (tibia).
- Compartment syndrome is pain from lower leg swelling.
- Runner's knee is knee pain from the way the knee cap (patella) thigh bone (femur) work together.
- IT band syndrome is pain on the outside of the thigh or knee from tight muscles.
- Plantar fasciitis is pain on the bottom of the foot.
- Scrapes and "road rash" are often from falling.
- Blisters result from poor fitting shoes or clothing.

### How can you prevent injuries?

**Stretching is important before and after every practice or event:**

- Include the calves (gastrocnemius/soleus), back of thigh (hamstrings), front of thigh (quadriceps), front of hip (hip flexors) and groin (hip adductors).
- Include **dynamic stretches**. These are gentle moving stretches. They are part of a whole body warm-up. Dynamic stretches prepare athletes for the event or sport practice.
- Include **static stretches**. These are non-moving holds for less than 30 seconds. Static stretches are for cool-down after the event or sport.

**The right equipment is extremely important:**

- Get fitted for the best shoe based on your foot and mechanics.
- Get special fitting for other equipment for your event.
- Do a safety check for all your equipment. Check this on a regular basis.

**The athlete must have proper hydration and nutrition to perform:**

- Hydrate 30 minutes before a practice or event. Drink water before, during and after activities.
- Only drink sports drinks if the practice or event lasts more than 90 minutes.
- Pay special attention to the nutritional needs for long distance running.

**Every athlete's training plan depends on the event. It's important to rest properly:**

- Have two days of rest or light workouts a week.
- Keep vigorous running workouts to no more than five a week. This includes race or game day.
- Keep increases in distance or speed to no more than 10 percent a week.

### What should you do in the off-season?

**Stay fit during the off-season:**

- Start a training program about six to eight weeks before the season starts. Work on: flexibility, strength, endurance, agility and event-specific techniques.
- Set up a jump training and agility program.
- Practice activities with explosive, burst-like moves, including jumping, bounds and coming out of starting blocks.
- Be proactive in learning the right skills for specific track and field events, and learning how to run with good form.

### What is the best way to warm up?

When your muscles are cold, injuries happen. Take time to warm-up and stretch. A full warm-up takes about 30 minutes. Here is a sample warm-up:

- Five to ten minutes of light cardiovascular work. Break a sweat!
- 15 minutes of gentle dynamic stretches.
- Five to ten minutes of sport-specific or activity-specific agility drills.

### Recommended Daily Maximum Running Distance:

Age group	Distance
<9 years old	3 km or 1.86 miles
9-11 years old	5 km or 3.11 miles
12-14 years old	10 km or 6.21 miles
15-16 years old	21.1 km or 13.1 miles (half marathon)
17 years old	30 km or 18.6 miles
18 years old	42.2 km or 26.2 miles (full marathon)

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