



Running to trim your waistline and improve your health

Running has numerous health benefits. Here's how to get started.

Running is one of the highest calorie burning exercises out there. It's simple, convenient, and the health benefits are many. Here's more about why running is good for you, and how to get started with a running program.

BENEFITS OF RUNNING

- Lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol)
- Raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol)
- Lower your blood pressure
- Increase your endurance
- Increase your cardiovascular fitness
- Manage your weight
- Improve your mood
- Stay strong and fit

PREPARATION HELPS AVOID INJURY

Wear running shoes and comfortable, protective clothing

Select the proper footwear by making sure you wear running shoes and not any other type of athletic shoes or casual street shoes. Dress in loose fitting, comfortable clothing and in layers if you need to adjust to changing temperature. If you run outside, choose clothes appropriate for the weather. Avoid rubberized materials, as they don't allow perspiration to evaporate. Wear bright colors or reflective tape after dark so that motorists can see you.

Warm up

Spend 5 minutes jogging or walking to warm up your muscles. Increase your pace gradually.

Stretch

After warm up, stretch your muscles. It is crucial to stretch muscles that are perceived as tight. This can help you run in a more natural posture. Include the calves, quadriceps, hamstring and side (iliotibial band) stretch.

Cool down after each running session

To reduce stress on your heart and muscles as well as cramping, end each run by walking for about five minutes. Then, repeat your stretches.

GETTING STARTED: FOCUS ON THE BASICS

- **Start slow and easy.** If running is new to you, it's best to start slow and easy. At first, run only as far or as fast as you find comfortable. If you can run for only a few minutes at a time, switch off between running and a fast walk. For example, try 20-30 minutes of running and walking, with walking no more than half the time. Then, over several weeks you can gradually work your way up to running the full 20-30 minutes without walking.
- **Use proper technique.** Using correct posture and movements is essential. Look straight forward, chest up, run tall (more upright), and stride naturally. Much can be said about proper running technique. For a better understanding of your gait (running posture) ask a qualified fitness professional.
- **Measure the intensity of your workout.** Knowing your heart rate allows you to increase the intensity to maximize your runs or slow down to avoid overdoing it. Manually finding your pulse at your wrist (radial

artery) or neck (carotid artery) may be difficult while running. Try an electronic device that displays your heart rate. This is a great tool to know exactly how hard you are working and intensity of the run.

- **Run 3 days out of the week to start.** Running everyday or 5 days a week in the beginning often results in injury. Keep it to 3 days a week for the first few weeks, and gradually either add a day or two or increase your distance and time.

SET GOALS, TRACK PROGRESS, STAY MOTIVATED FOR SUCCESS

The good news is that running — even only a modest amount — provides health and fitness benefits. For maximum benefits, work your way up to 30 minutes three times a week within your target heart rate zone. To achieve these benefits, it can help to set goals, track your progress and take steps to stay motivated.

Set realistic goals

If your goal is to run 365 days a year, you will set yourself up to fail. Set realistic goals, such as 30 minute runs 3 days/week. Soon you will be able to run longer distances and more often. Build running into your schedule today.

Track progress

Keep a record of the distance and time that you run to help you see your starting point, your progress, and serve as a source of inspiration. You'll feel great when you see how many miles you've ran each week/month/ year.

Record your numbers in a running journal or log them in a spreadsheet on your computer. Find out how long the run is before your start and wear a watch to time each run. You will be amazed how quickly you improve.

Stay motivated

Starting a running program takes initiative. Sticking with it takes commitment. The potential health and fitness benefits are well worth your effort. Over time you'll likely feel more invigorated. To stay motivated:

- **Make it fun.** If you don't like running alone, invite your spouse, partner, friend or neighbor to join you. Joining a running group can be a great way to stay motivated through the support of other runners.
- **Vary your routine.** Plan several different running routes for variety. But if you're running alone, be sure to tell someone which route you're taking.

Sometimes things happen to keep you from sticking to a regular running program. Don't be too hard on yourself when this happens and don't let a few days off sabotage your entire program. Revisit your goals and get to running.

YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU STARTED

The first steps of any journey can be the most difficult. It helps to keep your running goals foremost in your mind and remember, once you take that first step, you're on the way to an important destination — better fitness, better health.

Good luck on your running program!