

## Running as a means to stay fit

One of the things you might contemplate taking up to stay fit during the Corona crises is running. This is definitely a good idea. Why? According to Chris Napier in: [The Science of Running](#)

“Running is easy. You just put one foot in front of the other and go.”

And

“**Regular running** is associated with many **health benefits** that improve the **quality of life**”

However, there are some points of concern. There’s the risk of developing injuries. There’s a lot of advice to be found on how to prevent them. Unfortunately, a lot of that advice is contradictory. I’d like to mention two subjects that are frequently brought up in discussions. They are the importance of proper shoes, and the importance of stretching to prevent injuries. Again I will quote Chris Napier, who refers to these points as myths, “which have all been debunked by research”

Myth 1: I was injured because I wore the **wrong shoes** for my foot type

Fact: **Shoe type does not matter**

Evidence is lacking to support the idea that any particular shoe type, whether minimalist, maximalist, traditional, or otherwise, can help to prevent injury. Runners should, however, avoid any rapid changes in shoe type and monitor their overall training load to reduce their risk of injury.

Myth 2: I was injured because I didn’t **stretch enough** before I ran

Fact: **You should do dynamic stretching**

Research shows that static stretching does not reduce the risk of injury, and can actually decrease performance. It will not assist in recovery post-workout, but may improve joint flexibility and aid relaxation. Include dynamic stretching (involving movement) as part of a general warm up.

Running repeatedly subjects the body to impact forces. These forces make you stronger and faster, but they are also the main cause for getting injured. If you haven’t run before, or not for a long time, then you should build up your running time/distance very gradually and carefully.

You should run at a moderate intensity/speed, at which you can still conduct a decent conversation, and even then in short intervals of jogging, interspersed with walking intervals. A schedule you might start with is 2 minutes of jogging interspersed with 2 minutes of walking. If you’d do that 8 times you’re gone for about half an hour. Do this 2 or 3 times a week with at least 2 days between your work outs.

The next week you could increase the load by adding a minute to the 2<sup>nd</sup> jogging interval and/or reducing the 1<sup>st</sup> walking interval with 1 minute.

## When should you stop running?

This careful build up of your running should minimize the risk of sustaining an injury. It will help to “listen” to your body, though. It is crucial to recognize the difference between “good” and “bad” pain. Non-localized stiffness and mild pain (max 3 on a scale from 1-10) are to be expected and shouldn’t cause any alarm. But if the pain is higher it might indicate an injury, and you’d be wise to stop and take more time to recuperate, or change your activity temporarily.

Another way to minimize the risk of getting injured is to keep the impact down by taking short strides at a pace of 170-180 steps per minute. An easy way to accomplish this is to install a metronome app on your smartphone and set it to a pace between 170-180.

More advice will come in 2 weeks time.