

# Sports injuries uncovered

I would like to be able to promise that you can 'run injury-free for ever' if you follow the advice on these pages! However, I'm sure you are aware that whilst this sounds good, it is not entirely realistic. I can assure you, though, that our team will give you the best advice to help minimise the occurrence of injury and to correctly manage an injury if one does occur.

To introduce you to these pages, I would like to first discuss the general classification of running injuries. An injury can occur either as a result of an acute 'traumatic' episode, for example falling down a pothole in the pavement while out training, or, more commonly, as an 'overuse' injury. An overuse injury occurs as a result of repetitive episodes of overload on a tissue, each episode causing trauma on a microscopic scale, and accumulating with each run to cause injury, eg achilles tendinitis.

An overuse injury can be further classified as 'intrinsic' or 'extrinsic'. Intrinsic factors relate to the individual's physical characteristics. An extrinsic injury is caused by an external force. In reality running injuries are often a mixture of the two.

Examples of intrinsic factors which may lead to injury are:

- muscle imbalance
- lack of flexibility (or, in some cases, over-flexibility or joint laxity)
- 'gait abnormalities' and malalignment problems such as overpronation and leg length difference
- body composition and size

Often, such factors are not as important in the sedentary individual but can contribute increasingly to injury as running distances increase.

Examples of extrinsic factors include:

- inappropriate/worn training equipment – in the case of running: old, worn trainers
- surfaces – too much road running, running the same way on a cambered road repeatedly.
- training errors – the most common one being increasing mileage too quickly, also not allowing enough rest/recovery between runs
- environmental conditions – muscle/tendon injuries can occur in cold weather when there has been insufficient warm up; heat exhaustion and dehydration can also contribute to injuries.

It makes sense, therefore, that preventing running injuries involves identifying which of these factors is a problem and, where possible, doing something about it.

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