

Tips for Marathon Runner

Marathon runners should have started practicing for upcoming competitions. Injuries from practices would limit runners to reach their peak performances. And serious injuries may create long term issues which prevent runners from participating in future competition. Here are some tips that may help runners to prevent potential injuries.

What are the common running injuries?

Knee and ankle are more often to be injured for marathon runners. Yet, most injuries are preventable with proper training, warm-up and gear.

What is the major cause of running injuries?

The first and the most major cause is the lack of warm-up, for example not enough stretching before and after running. Some runners may begin with 5 to 10 minutes jogging without stretching. Indeed, muscle is like a rubber band, which you have to stretch before pulling tightly. It means that muscle must be fully stretched to be relaxed and enhanced with flexibility before any intense exercise. More than injuries prevention, studies show that stretching after running helps to relax muscle, ligament and joint tissues, and reduce chances of muscle sores.

What are other causes of common running injuries?

Amateur runners may not experience systemic training, which develops improper running postures. For example, stride width is too wide, poor or incorrect landing position and so on. Lack of systemic training contributes to the chances of running injuries.

Another cause of injuries is more of an external factor: Gear. It may be obvious that running with a pair of

brand-new shoes would cause injuries more easily, but wearing worn-out shoes isn't benefitting as well. We can use a car tire analogy for that. If a car tire has been on the road for some time, the material would start to harden and lose its flexibility. Then it's possible to cause a flat tire, and the situation starts getting out of control. For most running shoes, 500km could be a benchmark, which the ability of anti-vibration and level of support would decline afterward. The worn-out shoes provide less protection and it's easier to get injuries running with shoes like that. So it's important to check your sports shoes every once a while and make sure they are in good shape.

Tips for marathon runners on planning practices

First of all, give some thoughts and plan ahead on the practice routine and environment. Besides having enough warm-up, the running route is an important factor to consider for practice. If the road is at an extreme condition which either too-bumpy-and-hard or too-loose and-soft, this causes more pressure on the ankle that leads to injuries more easily. For example, sand, grass, and asphalt are not ideal for a runner to make long term practice. It creates more stress on the ankle which leads to different forms of injuries.



Secondly, be patient and realistic on the performance expectation. It is common for a runner to increase practice intensity and frequency as it gets closer to the competition. But an intensive practice plan designed for runners would lead to injuries more easily. Ideally, an amateur runner may want to practice three times a week with a 10% increase in time and distance each time. If a runner is pushed beyond the limit, it's easy to be injured.

Running and exercises at all kinds ought to be beneficial to health. I hope you enjoy running with the good spirit of sportsmanship, and give yourself a round of applause with all the cheers from the audience while reaching the endpoint safe and sound.

About the author

Dr Siu-Wah Kong is an orthopaedic surgeon focusing on foot & ankle surgery. A Chinese hot-pot fan and sports lover.