



Have you noticed how Runners are everywhere now that we're in Covid-19 lockdown. Running and walking are one of the few social-distancing activities. I love seeing so many people getting active. And when the lockdown is over, it would be great to see this continue

So there are many new runners out there (heaps of potential new club members!). Some who normally go to the gym and need a new outlet; mums and dads and kids who were too busy for the gym or running but who are now bored enough to give it a go

If you have a friend or family member have just started running here are some tips to make it a better experience – and to stay injury free

1. Build mileage gradually

Too often beginner runners will run too much in their first couple of weeks, only to deal with overuse problems or exhaustion a few weeks later. To avoid injuries and have more fun build time on your feet gradually. starting with 10-20 minutes run for three days a week and maybe one long run of 30-40 minutes. Don't increase by more than 10% each week.

2. Go for time rather than distance

Whatever your age or level of fitness, it's the length of time on your feet that will build fitness. When we run for km's it's all too easy for our competitive nature to kick in and want to "beat" that time. By focussing on time, no matter our speed, we can focus on effort rather than pace per mile. (so no need to go out and buy and expensive GPS watch just yet – not that you can do that now anyway!)

New runners main goal is to build up a strong aerobic base, which requires running longer at an easy, maintainable pace – if you can tell a joke while you are running, that's about the right pace.

3. Don't be afraid of walk breaks!

Walk breaks are great!. Instead of trying to run for 30-minutes straight, break up the run into running and walking segments. This will help you aerobically, but also mentally.

Use walk breaks to break up longer runs and bring your heart rate down between run segments. As a starting point, try running for anywhere from 2-5 minutes. Then, walk for one to two minutes. Repeat this cycle for the entire duration of your run, however long that is.

4. Warm-up and cool-down properly

We've all been there – you go out for a run, feel great, but then you can't walk the next day. To prevent a "post-run hangover," stretch after.

Cool-downs are important to relax any muscles that might have tightened up during the run. They'll also help prevent tight hip flexors and hamstrings, knee pain, improve your joint mobility, and reduce muscle soreness. All the things we need to keep us running longer and more often!

Some simple stretches to consider include lunges, bridges, hamstring curls, touching your toes.

5. Make a plan

As with any new activity, having a plan will lead to faster results. For example, set yourself a weekly run schedule (see Tip 1, this doesn't mean running every day), deciding how far to run, where, what time of day (a new runner will find an afternoon run easier to get into than a pre-breakfast run). For some, music helps, so download your playlist to listen to. The less decision-making a run requires, the less mental willpower it takes to get out and actually...go run. (even in the rain!)

6. Strength and Conditioning

Regularly incorporate mobility sessions and stretching from day one. This will help prevent common running ailments like shin splints, IT band pain, and sore calves.

Once or twice a week runners should also do some kind of strength training or barefoot exercises to improve overall fitness and improve bone and muscular strength. (search One Legged Squats on Google for lots of ideas). Other ideas include Planks, lunges, squats, sit-ups, press-ups

7. Pre and Post Run Food

A beginner runner will learn that sometimes running after eating certain foods does weird things to the stomach. To begin with, allow about an hour after the last meal before you run.

After runs, especially when longer than one hour, it is important to refuel as soon as possible. I like to plan that aspect BEFORE my run so as soon as I'm in the door the eating can commence! Foods that work well for me are Chocolate milk, smoothie with fruit and yoghurt, a Nutella and raisen sandwich (yum!), boiled potatoes with butter, a snack of nutty trail mix, or a spinach (for iron) and cheese omelet. Talk to other experienced runners to get ideas.

8. Ditch your ego

Like Coach Jacinda says, it's a marathon not a sprint

Don't worry what others think of how you look, how fast you are, your running gear etc – just getting out there and started is awesome! So start slow, don't shy away from a walk break, be realistic with progress and avoid running too fast or too long when you're just starting.