



EXPERT TRAINING TIPS FROM PROVIDENCE SPORTS MEDICINE

Building Blocks For Success: Training Foundations For Runners and Walkers

Many runners and walkers are eager to get back out on the road and get fit quickly but ramping up your mileage and training without a proper foundation is a recipe for injury. If you have your eye on a summer race or relay but it has been months since you've been training consistently, April can often be a time that triggers anxious thoughts for runners and walkers wanting to be prepared for the event. The immediate thought is to go out and try an old loop or path that you conquered last summer to gage your fitness level. Runners and walkers can set themselves up for long term success by easing back into a consistent, complimentary training program. Let's outline some foundational concepts to consider when getting your training ramped up again.

As you become more consistent in your running and walking again, take time to slowly ease into the increased frequency of training. If you have struggled to be consistent with training more than 2-3 times per week for many months, aim for consistency on the trails or roads first by planning to walk or jog shorter mileage 3 days a week for several weeks. Remember, you won't magically whip yourself into shape by immediately running or walking 7 days a week. In fact, doing too much too soon after long periods of inconsistency will stress your muscles and tendons and ultimately leave you at greater risk of injury. Over the course of 3 to 4 weeks you should aim to gradually increase your weekly running and walking mileage to about 12-15 total miles completed each week.

In order for your body to better handle all of the mileage in front of you, runners and walkers need to build specific strength and endurance via resistance training. While endurance activities and resistance training have historically been thought of as opposite activities, the right kind of resistance training is key not only to protect muscles and ligaments from getting worn down too easily, it can also help boost performance. Runners and walkers should aim to get at least one resistance training session per week in addition to your weekly mileage and then gradually build in a second session each week in the coming months. Being consistent with resistance training can help boost performance via enhanced force output of muscles, better joint coordination, and improved local muscular endurance.

Now that you have an understanding of how to complete a “pre-season” for your summer race or relay, remember that each exercise session needs to start with a “warm up.” Prior to any walking, running, or resistance training session you should complete a 10-15 minute dynamic warm up to prepare your body for the coming workout. A thorough dynamic warm up should increase your core temperature and get you sweating, involve all of the major joints of the following activity, work to coordinate joint movements, and it should gradually increase the level of intensity of your activity by the end of the 10-15 minutes. A good dynamic warm up will prepare you for the demands of the activity, which will not only help boost performance but will also help reduce your risk of injury.

Gradually ramping up your miles and consistency, strengthening your body with resistance training, and completing a dynamic warm up before each workout will help make your pre-season fitness foundation sound for the road ahead. As you complete your fitness foundation, keep an eye out for our guided 12-week training program for runners and walkers kicking off in May!

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