

RUNNERS FAQ'S

HYDERABAD RUNNERS SOCIETY



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This document is for Hyderabad Runners society internal circulation only.

1. Do I need visit a Doctor before I start running?

Yes, it is recommended to see a Doctor and get a clearance before you take up running as your daily physical fitness activity.

2. Can I Run a 5K?

Congratulations on your new running habit! Yes, running a 5K race is definitely a reasonable goal for beginner runners and there are lots of great reasons to run a race. Even someone who is generally inactive (assuming he or she has been cleared to run by a doctor) can be ready to run or run/walk a 5K with two months of training.

3. What Running Clothes Should I Wear When Running?

When you're first getting started with running, you don't need to rush out and buy fancy running clothing. Just wear comfortable clothes that you would workout in.

Women should make sure that they're wearing a good, supportive sports bra.

When you go out for your runs, be careful not to overdress. Once you warm up, your extra body heat will make it feel about 15 to 18 degrees warmer.

4. Is Running Effective for Weight Loss?

Running can definitely help you lose weight, especially if you're combining a regular running routine with cutting calories. Running is a full body workout and one of the most vigorous exercises out there, so it's definitely an efficient way to burn calories and shed pounds.

5. Can I Walk During My Runs?

Yes, it's absolutely fine to walk during your training runs and during the race itself.

Walking can actually help you in many ways, including:

- Walking helps you increase your muscle endurance without putting as much stress on your joints and muscles as running does.
- Your heart rate is lower when you're walking, which means your body will use fat for energy rather than mostly fast-burning carbs.
- Walking during a long run or race gives your running muscles and joints a chance to rest and recover, which can help you complete your planned distance and also help prevent injuries.
- Taking a walking break can really break up the monotony during a long run or race, which can help you deal with the mental challenges and any discomfort you may be feeling.

6. Why Stretching?

Stretching is most effective when the body is very warm but relaxed. Stretching can... enhance performance, prevent injury, increase mobility, aid in injury rehabilitation and simply make you feel great. Don't overstretch. Stretching should be gentle, not painful

7. What is Strength training? And how is that useful?

Strength training is a supplement to a runner's roadwork because it strengthens muscles and joints, which can improve race times and decrease injury risk.

Strength training improves muscular strength, maintain your current muscle mass, improves muscular endurance, and Resistance training prevents the gradual loss of strength and bone mineral content that occurs naturally with aging.

8. Should I Eat Before a Run?

When you begin a run, you should feel neither starved nor stuffed. You don't want to eat nearly before running because it may lead to cramping or side stitches. But running on an empty stomach may cause you to run out of energy and leave you feeling fatigued and lethargic during your runs. Your best bet is to eat a snack or light meal about 1 1/2 to 2 hours before you start running. Choose something high in carbohydrates and lower in fat, fiber, and protein. Some examples of good pre-workout fuel include: a whole wheat bread with peanut butter; a banana.

9. Does running ever Get Easier?

This is a very common question among new runners and there isn't one answer that fits everyone, since beginner runners sometimes struggle for different reasons. It takes time to build cardiovascular fitness and for your body to make physical adaptations. Many new runners find that the turning point is when they can run continuously for 30 minutes. At that point, they start to feel more comfortable and confident. So, it takes a little bit of patience to build up your fitness and get to a point where running feels easier. In the meantime, there are some things that you can do that will help make running more comfortable and enjoyable.

- Don't worry about pace
- Make sure you are breathing easily
- Increase your running time and mileage slowly.

10. Should You Stretch Before or After You Warm Up?

You should always warm up before you stretch. It's a bad idea to stretch cold muscles. If your muscles aren't loosened up before you stretch, you're more at risk for pulling them.

A warm-up is also important because it dilates your blood vessels, ensuring that your muscles are well supplied with oxygen. It also raises your muscles' temperature for optimal flexibility and efficiency. By slowly raising your heart rate, the warm-up also helps minimize stress on your heart when you start your run. A proper warm-up also helps reduce your risk of getting side stitches during your runs.

11. Why Do I Feel Out of Breath When Running?

When you're running, you're breathing harder and some huffing and puffing is expected, especially when you first get started. After a very easy warm-up, try to focus on breathing in through your mouth

and nose and out through your mouth. Concentrate on breathing from deep down in your belly. Deep belly breathing allows you to take in more air, which can also help prevent side stitches.

Try to run at a pace at which you can breathe easily. Use the "talk test" to figure out if your pace is appropriate. You should be able to speak in full sentences, without gasping for air. If you can't do that, you may have to slow down or take a walking break. As you become fit, your breathing will become easier.

Some runners find themselves out of breath when they try to move the pace too soon. Try to build up your endurance before you focus on speed. Once you're breathing comfortably for your runs, you can work on getting faster.

12. How Fast Should Beginners Run?

Many runners, especially beginners, are always curious about what pace they should be running. Most daily runs should be done at an "easy" pace. But what's the best way to establish what "easy" means? The best and simplest way to determine this is to run slow enough so that you can carry on a conversation. If you're running with someone, that means you should be able to speak in complete sentences, not just give "yes" or "no" answers. If you're running alone, you should be able to sing "Happy Birthday" without gasping for air. For some new runners, a conversational pace may mean doing a run/walk combination. As a beginner, most of your runs should be at conversational pace. Don't worry about your pace per mile -- if you can pass the "talk test", you're running at the right speed.

13. What Should a Beginner Runner Wear?

Wearing old running shoes or running shoes that aren't right for your foot type and running style is one of the biggest causes of running injuries. Therefore, it's not a good idea to dig out those old tennis shoes from the back of your closet and assume you can run in them. You need fresh, well-cushioned shoes that are designed for running, fit well and match your foot type and running style. Even if you have an old pair of running shoes that you think are comfortable, the cushioning may be worn out, so they probably need to be replaced.

It's best to go to a running-specialty store, where experts can evaluate your foot and running style and make recommendations for the right shoes for you.

You don't need to buy the most expensive pair of running shoes in the store, but investing in a good pair of running shoes is a smart idea that will help prevent injuries and increase your comfort while running.

14. What's the Best Time of Day to Run?

Running in the morning may help keep you motivated to run. Research shows that morning exercisers are more consistent with their workout regimens than those who work out in the afternoon or evening. Early morning is also the coolest part of the day during warmer months, so you'll be more safe and comfortable if you run in the morning when it's hot. If you usually run in the morning, you'll also sleep better -- a study found that morning exercise leads to better sleep quality than afternoon or evening exercise.

Of course, while there seems to be more evidence indicating that morning running is better than running in the afternoon or evening, the bottom line is that some running is better than no running at all. Run when it works best for your schedule because no matter what time of day you run, you'll still get all the great benefits of running.

15. Can I Get Cramps from Drinking While Running?

The idea that you'll get cramps from drinking water while running is a common myth among runners. Drinking water, whether it's warm or cold, before or during running should not cause side stitches. The best ways to prevent side stitches while running is to make sure you warm-up properly and to breathe deeply through your mouth.

If you avoid drinking during runs because you're worried about cramps, you could end up with much bigger problems, such as dehydration or heat stroke. You should make sure that you drink some water (about 4-8 oz.) before you start running so that you're hydrated when you begin.

Make sure you sip your water, don't gulp it, so you don't get hiccups or other issues.

16. Where Should You Run?

If you are planning on running on your local roads or sidewalks, make sure you look for routes that have minimal traffic and a wide shoulder (or sidewalks). And be sure to follow safety precautions for running outside, such as running in the opposite direction of traffic. It's also important that you practice good running etiquette and are courteous to other runners, walkers, and cyclists.

Another safe, convenient option is the track at your nearest play ground or athletic stadium or Parks as they are open to the public, and they're also a softer surface, compared to asphalt and concrete.

17. Is There a Difference Between Running on a Treadmill and Running Outside?

Running on a treadmill feels somewhat easier physically because the ground is being pulled underneath your feet and there's no wind resistance. Running outside demands more from your body because you're propelling your body forward stride for stride. Your calf muscles have to work much harder than when you are on a treadmill. If you're training for a specific outdoor race, try to train outside as much as possible to get prepared for race conditions.

18. What's the Best Way to Breathe When Running?

You should breathe through both your mouth AND nose when you're running. Your muscles need oxygen to keep moving and your nose alone simply can't deliver enough. You need mouth breathing to take in more oxygen.

Make sure you're breathing more from your diaphragm, or belly, not from your chest -- that's too shallow. Deep belly breathing allows you to take in more air, which can also help prevent side stitches.

You should exhale through your mouth and try to focus on exhaling fully, which will remove more carbon dioxide and also help you inhale more deeply.

Proper breathing makes a huge difference in terms of your overall comfort and performance when running

19. How Often Do Runners Need Rest Days?

One of the biggest misconceptions among runners who want to get faster is that they should run every day. In reality, the body actually needs rest days to recover and repair muscles to get stronger. So, if you run every day without taking days off, you won't see much improvement.

Running puts a lot of stress on your joints, and taking rest days will give your joints a chance to recover from all that pounding. It's also good to take a mental break from running, so you don't lose motivation by running every day.

20. Should I Run Through the Pain?

It's very common for runners to experience some aches and pains, especially if you're training for a long-distance event such as a marathon. The question that runner probably struggle with the most is when can you run through pain and when should you stop?

This question is somewhat difficult to answer especially for new runners who are just getting in touch with what their physical bodies can tolerate. Let's face it, after a long run or other hard workout, you are likely going to experience muscle soreness and some generalized use pain. When you feel localized pain in some area of your body that is usually a sign that something is not right. If that pain is sharp and localized, that is something you need to pay attention to and, well, do something about.

21. What It Means When Your Foot Goes Numb When Running

Numbness or a tingling sensation (unrelated to the cold weather) in the toes is a common complaint among runners. Often, the cause is wearing running shoes that are too tight or tying your shoelaces too tight.

Your feet swell when you run, so you should be wearing running shoes that are a half size to a full size bigger than your street shoe size. If you have a wide foot, you may need to get a running shoe that has an extra-wide toe box.

Sometimes toe numbness can be a result of a biomechanical issue that can be corrected with the right shoes and/or inserts.

If you continue to have a problem with foot numbness and you're prone to muscle tightness, you'll need to work on relieving the tightness. Go for a professional sports massage or try using a foam roller or other massage tool to roll areas where runners frequently get tight, such as your quads, calves, hamstrings, and IT band.

22. Which Part of My Foot Should I Land on When Running?

Yes, the middle of your foot is the best place to land when running. You should land mid-sole and then roll through to the front of your toes.

You want to avoid being a heel-striker. If you land on your heels, you are stopping your forward momentum and causing undue stress on your knees. Landing on your toes causes your calves to do too much work, which can lead to shin splints. Running on your toes can also lead to bouncing, which is an inefficient way to run.

To determine what type of foot striker you are, pay attention to which part of foot you're landing on when you're running. You can't change your foot strike overnight, but you can work to gradually work towards landing mid-sole.

23. What If I Miss a Day of Training?

This question comes up all the time, from runners of all different levels who are training for all different types of races. In other words, ALL runners miss days of training here and there. Sometimes we get sick, work gets in the way, or we have to deal with a family issue. Even professional runners take days off when they need to.

But I know how you feel -- it's easy to get discouraged if you get busy or sick and you miss a day -- or several days -- of training. Don't beat yourself up for missing a run -- life happens. It's especially important if you're sick that you give your body a chance to recover.

You're not going to suddenly lose fitness because you missed a workout! Keep in mind that you're supposed to be taking rest days during your training.

24. Can I Listen to Music During Runs?

There are several reasons why you shouldn't wear headphones and listen to music while running outside. The music may block noise from oncoming cars, cyclists, other runners -- even unfriendly dogs. One of the basic etiquette rules of running is that you can hear others, so you can move out of the way or stop, when necessary. Another downside is that your cadence may be off, as you'll likely speed up and slow down based on the tempo of the music.

25. How to Avoid Bouncing When You Run?

If you bounce when you run, your head and body are moving up and down too much, which wastes a lot of energy. More time in the air means you're going to slow down. Too much up-and-down movement is also tough on your leg and foot muscles -- especially your quadriceps. The higher you lift yourself off the ground, the greater the shock you have to absorb when landing and the faster your legs will fatigue.

To minimize bounce and save energy, run lightly, land softly on your feet, and focus on a faster turnover. Try to keep your feet low to the ground with shorter strides. Your arms can help you keep your stride low and short. Keep your arms bent at a 90 degree angle and concentrate on swinging them lower and shorter. By keeping your arm swing lower and quicker, your legs will stay lower to the ground -- resulting in a shorter stride.

26. What Type of Socks Should You Run In?

You can buy running socks in many different materials, thicknesses and sizes. When choosing a sock for running, the most important factor to consider is the material. You want to stay away from 100% cotton socks. Once cotton gets wet, it stays wet. So, when your feet sweat or you step in a puddle, the moisture won't get wicked away. Wearing cotton socks in the winter will make your feet feel cold and clammy. And they'll cause blisters in the summer.

The best running socks are ones that are made from synthetic materials such as polyester, acrylic, and CoolMax because they'll wick away moisture. For winter running, wool blends such as Smart Wool are also a good choice

27. When Should You Replace Your Running Shoes?

Running in old or worn-out shoes is a common cause of running injuries. Your running shoes lose shock absorption, cushioning and stability over time. Continuing to run in worn-out running shoes increases the stress and impact on your legs and joints, which can lead to overuse injuries. The easiest thing you can do to prevent those types of injuries is replace your running shoes when they're worn-out and have lost their cushioning.

A good rule of thumb is to replace your running shoes every 300 to 400 miles, depending on your running style, body weight, and the surface on which you run.

Smaller runners can get new running shoes at the upper end of the recommendation, while heavier runners should consider replacement shoes closer to the 300 mile mark. If you run on rough roads, you'll need to replace your running shoes sooner than if you primarily run on a treadmill. Keep in mind that you're also wearing down your shoes when you're wearing them for things other than running, even just walking around in them.

28. What Is a Personal Record in Running?

Once you've run your first road race, you have a PR, or a "Personal Record." It refers to your best time in a race of a specific distance. So, if you run a 5K race in 28:45, that's your PR for the 5K distance. If you run faster than 28:45 in a subsequent 5K race, then you have a new PR for that distance. So you'll have PRs for different race distances, from 1-milers to marathons.

You may also hear some runners call their best race times "PBs" or "Personal Bests."

29. How Do I Measure My Run/Walk Intervals?

If you're doing the run/walk method that means that you're running for a certain period of time or distance, and then walking for a different interval. Some run/walkers will use landmarks, such as lampposts or telephone poles to measure their run or walk intervals, but many run/walkers use time. It can be annoying to constantly check your watch to know when your interval is over. Many run/walkers use a watch or other device that beeps to signal when they need to switch to walking or running.

30. Should You Run the Day Before a Race?

There are lots of opinions out there about whether or not you should run the day before a race, regardless of whether you're running a shorter race like a 5K or a long-distance event such as a marathon. On the one hand, it's good to rest your running muscles in preparation for a race, especially if it's a long one, such as a marathon. Most runners who rest the day before a race say that they feel fresh and ready when they get to the starting line. But other runners will swear by running very easy for 20 minutes the day before a race, saying that it helps them loosen up and shake off the nervous feelings. So, you really need to see what works best for you

31. Should New Runners Try to Improve Their Distance or Speed?

It's better for you to start with trying to increase the distance (or time, if you prefer to measure by time) of your runs. As you build up your endurance, your speed will also improve.

32. Can I Burn Fat by Running?

Running is a great way to lose weight and inches, but it's important to understand the difference between "burning fat" and "losing fat," as well as what it takes to actually lose weight.

33. What It Means to Burn Fat by Running

The body primarily uses carbs and fat as energy to fuel runs. The ratio of carbs and fat changes depending on your speed and intensity. For high-intensity running, such as interval workouts, the body will rely more on carbs for fuel than fat because they're a quicker source of energy. For long, slower runs, your body starts using fat as an energy source.

34. What It Takes to Lose Fat by Running

So, you would think that to lose fat, you should just do a lot of slow running, right? That's not the case. When you're trying to shed pounds, it doesn't matter what type of fuel you use. Just because you're using more fat as energy doesn't mean you're losing fat or burning more calories.

In order to lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you're taking in, simple as that. With running, as with other forms of exercise, the harder you work, the more calories you'll burn

35. What's the Best Way to Run Downhill?

Uphill running is challenging, but it's actually downhill running that can get runners into trouble. Hit the downhill too fast and hard, and you'll pay for it later in the race. Not running downhill properly can also lead to running injuries, such as shin splints or knee pain. Here are some tips on downhill running to save your legs and avoid wasting energy:

Don't over stride: Although it's tempting to take huge leaping steps to reduce the pounding on your legs, you'll hammer your quads and suffer later. It's fine to pick up the pace on the way down, but make sure you don't let yourself get out of control. Make sure you're maintaining good posture and running form.

Keep your feet low to the ground and try to stay light on your feet. Your stride turnover will pick up, so try to keep your steps short and quick. Try to keep your shoulders just slightly in front of you and your hips and feet under you. Don't lean back and try to brake yourself. Let gravity pull you as you glide down the hill.

36. How to Run Up Hills Properly?

If you're one of those runners who fears running hills, it may be because you're not using the right hill running techniques. Follow these steps for proper hill running and you may actually look forward to inclines during your runs.

Here's How:

Don't start thinking that you want to attack the hill. The key to running hills properly is to maintain your effort level (which translates into a slower pace on the uphill), so you don't waste energy and end up out of breath at the top of the hill (that's a common mistake among runners).

As you approach an uphill, make sure you have good running form. Your arms should be at a 90 degree angle and should be moving forward and back (rotating at the shoulder), not side to side.

Your back should be straight and erect. You can lean in very slightly from the hips, but make sure you're not hunched over.

Concentrate on swinging your arms lower and shorter. By keeping your arm swing lower and quicker, your legs will stay lower to the ground -- resulting in a short, quick stride.

As you reach the top of the hill, you can begin your normal stride again. If you ran the hill properly, you'll be able pass runners who wasted too much energy on the hill.

37. Is It Normal to Feel Pain When Running?

As you increase your distance and intensity, it's normal to feel some discomfort, such as sore muscles. Sometimes you'll feel soreness when you first start your run, but it feels better as you warm up and continue running. You shouldn't be feeling real pain, though. Watch out for pain that causes you to run with a limp or altered stride, or pain that keeps getting worse as you continue running. If you notice any of those red flags, you should stop running immediately and consult sports physician.

It's also normal to feel some muscle soreness the day after or two days after running, although that should dissolve. If you have pain that lasts for more than a week, even after taking some rest days, Sports Physician.

38. Should You Drink Coffee Before Running?

Some people drink coffee before runs and never have any issues with it, but others experience GI issues or heartburn if they drink it before a run. If you can tolerate it and actually need coffee to get you going in the morning, then it's safe to keep enjoying it before your runs.

Benefits of Caffeine for Runners

You may find that drinking a cup of coffee before a run or race has a positive effect. Pre-run caffeine has been shown to enhance performance and endurance. One study found more than two-thirds of Olympic athletes use caffeine to increase their performance. Research also shows that caffeine boosts your mental alertness, improves your mood, and boosts your desire to run hard.

39. What's the Difference Between Running and Jogging?

When is someone jogging and when are they running? Is there really a difference between the two? If you asked most people, they would probably say that that jogging is a slow form of running. But there really isn't any strict definition or standard. It's not as if once you drop below a certain pace, you are suddenly defined as a jogger rather than a runner. Most people run at various different paces depending on their distance, so a distinction based on pace would be very confusing.

40. What's the Best Running Surface?

Although running on a sidewalk may sometimes be a safer choice (to avoid traffic), asphalt is a bit softer and therefore easier on your body than concrete. So, if you're running on a hard surface, opt for asphalt roads, as long as it's a safe road to run on.

Softer surfaces such as grass, sand, or dirt trails or paths are definitely easier on your body than concrete or asphalt, but that doesn't mean there are no risks for common overuse injuries. The reality is that runners can also get injured on softer terrain, too, because it may not provide the same stability as a harder surface. Your feet will pronate, or roll inward, further, which could increase the strain on your muscles and joints, leading to injury.

Healthy runners should always vary their running surfaces to work on improving their strength, balance, and to help avoid injury.

Switch up your routes and do some trail running, some running on asphalt, some track runs, and even some running on sidewalks if you have to. Beach running is a fun way to mix up your running routine.

For Hyderabad Runners Only