



# RUN FOR IT

Putting one foot in front of the other requires some intel – take it away, experts

**W**hether you're a 5k devotee or prefer a more sporadic approach when it comes to running, you'd be forgiven if a few questions pop into your head as your trainers hit the ground. Like when you've just set off and you're wondering whether passers-by will see you when nature calls (admit it, we've all been there). But techniques for peeing while on the move aside, there are some other things that might need clearing up before you get on the road. Read on to get the information you need.

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## HOW DO I START RUNNING?

"I usually advise patients to start with walk and run intervals, which will be very similar to the format on apps such as Couch to 5k," says Fergus Morrison, physiotherapist at the Institute of Sport, Exercise & Health\* (iseh.co.uk). "One of the biggest risk factors for injury is sudden changes in your training load, so if you're not used to running, then it's important to follow a progressive programme that gradually increases the amount of running you're doing on a weekly basis. That said, not everyone will respond the same way even if they follow the same programme, so it can be useful to keep a training diary to note down how you feel after each run and then modify your running schedule accordingly."

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## DOES RUNNING GET EASIER?

"In short, yes – it's always tough to start, however improvements come quickly," states Tim Benjamin, former Olympic runner and WithU trainer (withutraining.com). "There are two things that tend to happen as you progress. Firstly, your cardiovascular system adapts, meaning your body is using oxygen more efficiently, and secondly, your supporting muscles get stronger, allowing you to run more efficiently and therefore further and faster."

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### IS IT HEALTHY TO RUN EVERY DAY?

“One of the major risk factors for injury is sudden changes to training load,” Fergus reiterates. “If you’re not used to running, then going from zero to seven runs per week is going to be a big increase that your body will struggle to adapt to. If you’re used to running regularly, then there’s no reason why you can’t run every day, as long as you’re doing the majority of your mileage at an easy pace. Contrary to popular opinion, running is not necessarily bad for your joints, even ultra-marathon runners who run up to 100km per week don’t tend to get arthritis any more frequently or sooner than those who do not run regularly.”

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### SHOULD I EAT BEFORE A RUN?

“This all depends on how long you’re running for and also the intensity of the run,” says Eastnine running coach Ania Gabb (eastnine.fit). “If you’re planning an early morning run, something light, such as a banana or a spoonful of peanut butter, will help to keep you energised and your sugar levels up. If you have a long, intense session, then try to eat two hours before. A bowl of porridge is perfect for long runs, but make sure you have plenty of time for this to settle. There’s nothing worse than going out for a run feeling heavy and uncomfortable.”

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### WHAT IS A RECOVERY RUN?

“This is a run that’s completed at a pace during which you’d be able to hold a conversation. The purpose of a recovery run is to increase blood flow and help to get rid of waste products built up through more intense training,” explains Tim.

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### HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY KNEES IF I INCREASE MY RUNNING?

“Caring for your knees is essential if you want to be able to run pain-free for a long time. The best way to protect yourself against knee injuries is working on the muscles that surround it and ensuring you have a balanced structure,” states Juggy Sidhu, a health and exercise expert (juggysidhu.com). “My clients often come to me with an underdeveloped posterior chain, which essentially means that the muscles in their glutes, adductors and abductors may be weak and aren’t aiding stability through the hips. This can be addressed through stretching and contracting the muscles at their extreme ranges and will often provide a solution to the pain they’re experiencing, while helping to avoid future injuries.”

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### WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN BUYING A PAIR OF RUNNING TRAINERS?

“We will have different running styles, biomechanical make-up and preferences. Having your gait and running style analysed by a specialist running shop is a great place to start, as they will often recommend the best shoe based on an analysis of your foot strike after a small jogging test on a treadmill in store,” Tim suggests.

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### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I RUN IF WEIGHT LOSS IS MY GOAL?

“Weight loss is about creating a calorie deficit, where you’re using slightly more calories than you’re consuming,” explains Ania. “On average, you burn about 100 calories per mile and most people overestimate this. Start with three runs per week and gradually build from there. Distance is down to your fitness level and weight, so increase this slowly to prevent injury. When the [excess weight] starts to drop off, you’ll inevitably be able to run a little further much easier and gradually build up to four or five times a week, if you want to.”



### TOP TIPS FOR A HEALTHY RUNNERS’ HEAD

The mental health side to running is equally as important as the physical. Dr Juliet McGrattan, a GP-turned-running-coach, suggests her tips for a positive attitude to running

1. Run regularly to get the most benefits from running.
2. Find your tribe. A real or virtual community will support and motivate you.
3. Head outside to run whenever you can to get the boost that nature gives your mood and brain power.
4. Know that you are enough. You have nothing to prove.
5. Be happy without running. Make sure that your happiness doesn’t depend on running. You should be happy and fulfilled without it.
6. Don’t let running become a pressure. Check in with yourself intermittently to make sure you are enjoying your running.
7. Volunteer regularly or from time to time. Giving back to others, including the running community, is rewarding and life-enriching.
8. Never be afraid to ask for help. Find someone you trust to share your thoughts and problems with.



#### For more, read this

**RUN WELL**

Run Well: Essential Health Questions and Answers for Runners by Dr Juliet McGrattan is published by Bloomsbury, £12.99. Available to buy now.

\*in partnership with The Princess Grace Hospital (part of HCA Healthcare UK)