

EMPOWER YOUR RUNNING

Minimize your injury risk to set the stage for long-term health and performance.

RUN SMARTER, NOT HARDER

Being a runner is fun and empowering. Injuries can be a real bummer, and can derail you from your goals. There are considerations women can use to evaluate their health and performance, minimize injury risk, and set the stage for health in the long run.

Education is power. Knowing how to identify unhealthy beliefs and behaviors can reduce injury risk. It also leaves room for running to be a lot more fun.

Women face unique circumstances with physical development and sports throughout the lifespan, with major changes that happen around adolescence.

Recognizing and identifying these hurdles is imperative to conquering them. Sometimes, it feels so frustrating.

So why keep trying?

Because sport is vital for youth and adolescent athletes.

Highly involved athletes were more likely to report good grades, aspire to graduate college, and were less apt to get into trouble at school than non-athletes (Veliz, P. et al 2019).

Highly involved athletes had lower rates of depressive affect, lower levels of self-derogation, and higher levels of self-esteem when compared to students involved with other extracurricular activities (Veliz, P. et al 2019).

Youth athletes gain valuable leadership and communication skills through sport that they will use to better society (Veliz, P. et al 2019).

However, young females begin to drop out of sport around the age of puberty, a trend not seen in boys. They are lacking education and support about sex-specific differences and resources for sport (Scurr, J. et al 2016).

Limited knowledge of female-specific health and injury places girls at greater risk of injury and can hinder sport participation (Staurowsky, E. J., et al 2020.)

So, female runner, it's time to level up. Your knowledge. Your power. Your running.

Keep reading to keep running.

BEHAVIORS & BELIEFS THAT INCREASE YOUR INJURY RISK

Training too much

Training is hard work, but it shouldn't make you feel fatigued all the time, run down, irritable, overly sore, sleepless or injured. The **effects of overtraining are sneaky** and hard to recognize when you're in the middle of it. Rushing back from an injury, jumping into a difficult training plan, or just overestimating how much mileage you can handle are all reasons over-training can creep in.

Recovering too little

You can only benefit from training you've recovered from. Runners are awesome at working hard, but not always as good at letting muscles recover. Making time for your body to recover is essential for long-term health and success. The most important recovery techniques are getting proper **sleep and eating enough food.**

Losing your period

Your period is a barometer of your health. Although it can be common for athletes to lose their period during training, it is not normal. Menstrual cycles play a big part in producing hormones that protect bone cells. If you're in an energy deficit, your body may compensate by stopping your period, which puts bones at risk for fractures. A healthy period means a healthy body.

Underfueling

Runners have high energy needs. If you think eating less will make you faster, think again. Under-fueling leads to what's called **"low energy availability,"** meaning your body isn't getting enough fuel to support the stress of training. This leads to a dangerous condition called Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-s). RED-s is impaired functioning of all the bodily systems that make you a healthy person and a strong athlete. As an energy deficit grows larger, many important aspects of health and performance get worse, like muscular strength, concentration, coordination, and bone health. RED-s significantly increases your risk of injury because your body starts breaking down nutrient reserves, like bones, to keep you alive.

Confusing performance with health

Fast does not necessarily equal healthy. Good performance does not always mean an athlete is healthy. Running fast and performing well is exciting, but it can't be sustained long-term with an energy deficit. Healthy and fast running is a product of consistent, steady training and self-care. You may see an improvement in performance shortly after increasing mileage, but over-training isn't a long-term plan. After a while, you'll start to feel fatigued, sore, burned out and injured.

TAKE ACTION

What should I do?

Be honest with yourself

If you're struggling and recognize you have unhealthy behaviors and beliefs around running, acknowledge that something has to change. There can be a lot of pressure (especially from yourself!) to run fast all the time, no matter what. But you have to be healthy to perform your best. Long-term health will give you the best chance at long-term success in sport.

Talk with someone who can help

Tell people you trust about concerns about your health, training, and performance. Healthcare providers, including physical therapists, should take your concerns seriously. Find someone you trust and can connect with honestly. Visit drkatienoble.com for more resources.

Support yourself & others

It can be difficult for anyone to know what to do when dealing with an energy deficit, over-training, RED-s, or chronic injuries. Be honest and understanding with yourself and others. These are very common issues among runners, so you're not alone. There are real solutions that will make you feel healthy, happy, and fast.

drkatienoble.com