

RUNNING PROBLEMS:

What are they
and what can
you do about
them today?



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INTRODUCTION

Runners put their body through a lot. When you log a lot of miles, it's very common that you end up with running-related problems every now and again. From heel pain to back issues, these problems can hold you back from enjoying your time on the road.

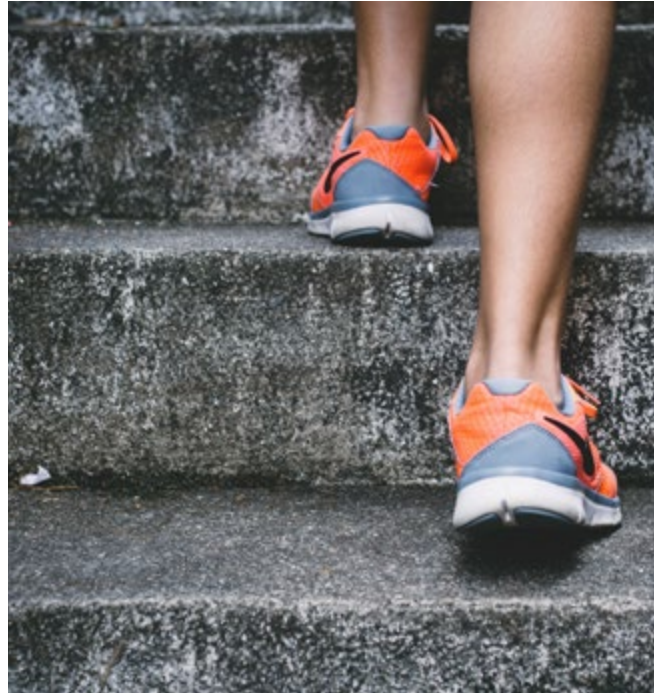
The human body is an incredibly complex infrastructure made up of a network of bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and blood vessels that all work together to establish the harmonious synergy required in running. One disgruntled cog, and the whole machine could stop functioning altogether.

In this guide, we explore some of the most common issues that plague runners, what causes these types of problems, and how to avoid and treat them.

SOME COMMON RUNNING PROBLEMS

HEEL PAIN

This condition is not typically caused by a direct trauma or injury, but more commonly the result of running, or training on a new surface. You'll feel the pain at the bottom of your heel and sometimes in the arch of your foot. The pain is usually worse when you first step out of bed in the morning. It may also occur only during or after a run.



FOREFOOT PAIN

This pain is usually felt in the ball of your foot, and you usually feel it more when you're standing, walking or running. You don't typically feel it when you're sitting or resting. One of the reasons for this forefoot pain could be a stress fracture.



SHIN SPLINTS

This is a persistent soreness on the front or the inner side of the shin bone. This often affects new runners, or those who don't run regularly.



LOWER BACK PAIN

This type of pain usually materialises as an ache in the lower back muscles before, during or after running.



KNEES

This pain is usually located under, slightly above or below the kneecap. It generally worsens when you run uphill, downhill or up and down stairs. In some worse cases, the knee may swell.

ANKLE PAIN

This feels like a pain or tightness in the ankle, and it often extends across the top of the foot.

HIP PAIN

This pain is typically experienced in the front of the hip joint (where the leg attaches to the trunk).

WHAT CAUSES THESE PROBLEMS?

Inappropriate footwear: too flimsy, not supportive, too rigid, shoes that don't fit properly.

Overstriding: when your stride length is too long.

Asymmetries: where one side of the body is doing something different to the other side, due to restrictions, a weakness, or tightness.

Excessive or inappropriate foot movement/function: e.g. your foot may be rolling inwards or outwards too far.

Muscle fatigue: this happens when a muscle is overloaded through pure repetition or when a muscle is compensating for a weaker muscle. The muscle could be working differently to the way it's designed, because of joint restrictions or problems with your posture.

Cadence: where foot strike is too slow or too fast for your running style. Can lead to postural problems, overworked muscles, or the feet not absorbing shock properly when they hit the ground.

Postural problems: leaning too far in one direction causing abnormal stresses and poor shock absorption.

Poor running style: muscles can become overloaded, joints stressed and you can even develop stress fractures if the shock from impacting the ground isn't accommodated efficiently.

YOU CAN AVOID THESE PROBLEMS BY:

Changing your running shoes regularly. If you run most days, it's a good idea to have more than one pair of runners.

When you buy a new pair of runners, get them professionally fitted.

Seek treatment and advice early to reduce the chances of your problem becoming chronic, and much harder to resolve.

Vary the surfaces you run on. Constantly challenge your body to adapt.

If you're new to running, build up gradually.

Make sure you have a balanced, healthy diet. Your body will need more energy if you're taking up running.

Make sure to drink enough water.

Warm up before your run and cool down with stretches to maintain your flexibility. Pay attention to your calves and hamstrings.

Talk to experienced runners about the strategies they've found to keep themselves fit.

Find yourself a good sports massage therapist, and invest in regular massages.

Learn to listen to your body and pay attention to any pain points. See if they disappear when you warm up, for example.



HOW DO WE TREAT RUNNING PROBLEMS?

History Taking: We ask you about your issues, about the kind of running you're doing now and ask about your goals.

Gait Analysis: We record how you run and look at your running style. We look for asymmetries, running cadence, your posture, and any restrictions and dysfunction.

Pressure Patterns: We examine your foot strike patterns and your pressure and force patterns. This means examining how hard your feet strike the ground, and how much pressure is exerted on different areas of the feet and joints. One of the primary tools we use is our *gait analysis system*, which has thousands of sensors and two cameras. It displays your footsteps on a big screen in front of you in real time.



Physical Examination: We look for joint restrictions, muscle tightness, areas of pain, the range of motion of your different joints, muscles and tendons.

Treatment: This includes dry needling, trigger point therapy, joint mobilisation, fascial release, stretching and rehabilitation exercises.

Advice: We will provide advice on modifying your running style and using appropriate footwear.



Exercises: We will prescribe exercises tailored to your condition, which could include exercises for balance, strength and mobility.

Orthotic Therapy: If necessary, we can fit you with a pair of orthotics to help support and guide your feet.

