



# BalanceHealth Newsletter

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## Running for your Health

Running is one of the most effective, simple, and most cost efficient exercises. All that is needed to begin a running/jogging regimen is a good pair of sneakers and the great outdoors, no fancy equipment, personal trainer, or gym membership needed. The warmer weather makes summer the perfect time to work running into your fitness routine.

The good news is that you don't have to become a marathon runner to reap the benefits, simply adding it into your weekly schedule will improve your overall fitness. Running is also versatile and you can do it virtually anywhere you are, weather permitting. Some people prefer a quick jog around the neighborhood, some like to run on a track to measure their distance and time, some run hills for additional resistance and strength training, and some like running in a park or on a trail to enjoy both exercise and the natural beauty that is surrounding them. If you are vacationing at the beach this summer, shake up your normal routine by running on the sand. If you find yourself vacationing in some fabulous city full of culture, taking a jog will allow you to see the sights.

### The Benefits of Running:

Running helps improve both physical and mental health, promotes weight loss and increases fitness.

**Cardiovascular Health** – Running is one of the very best ways to condition your heart

and lungs. It helps to ensure that blood and oxygen flow efficiently through the body and increases the capacity of blood circulation. These factors help to decrease heart attack risk, reduce the risk of blood clots, lower blood pressure naturally, increase HDL cholesterol (the good kind!), and increase lung use.

**Digestion** – Running can help to speed up the digestive system, which can address issues in this area by stimulating more efficient removal of waste from the body.

**Bone Health** – Contrary to popular belief, as long as you have a sensible and safe approach to running, it will actually improve bone health, not harm it. Just as muscles become weak when they are not used, bones will also become frail if they are not exposed to any physical demands. Since running is a weight bearing exercise, it strengthens the bone density of your legs, hips, and back, which can help fend off osteoporosis.

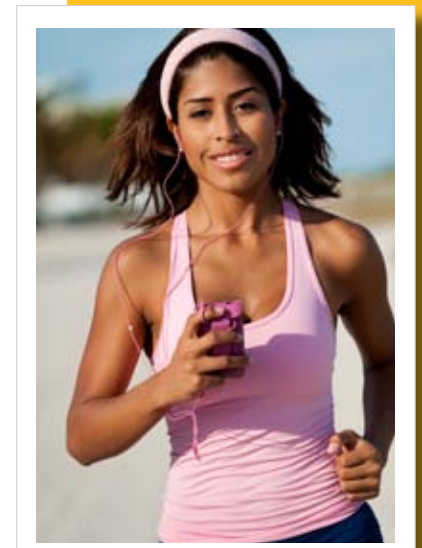
**Immune System** – Running can stimulate a higher concentration of white blood cells, during and after exercise, which boosts immunity.

**Mental Health** – Running stimulates the release of endorphins which are “feel good” brain chemicals. Because of this running has been shown to be a

For more information or advice about running contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling

**1.800.327.2255**

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powerful stress reliever and a natural way to ward off anxiety and depression. Jogging also builds confidence and self-esteem because it allows you to set and reach goals, resulting in a rewarding feeling of accomplishment.

**Weight Loss** – Running is one of the best ways to burn calories and the more calories you burn the more weight you can drop. Running has one of the highest caloric burns of all exercises. A 150 pound person will burn 100 calories per mile! Running also helps build muscle mass, which speeds up your resting metabolism. This means that you will start burning more calories even while you're just sitting at your desk!

#### **Before You Begin:**

If you are new to running be sure to check with your doctor before you start a running (or any other exercise) program. If you lead a sedentary lifestyle, have a chronic illness, are significantly overweight, or if you are over 40 years old it is especially important to gain clearance from your doctor as running is a vigorous high intensity workout and you do not want to place too much strain on your body. Be sure to invest in a properly fitted pair of running sneakers that are in good condition as poorly fitted sneakers are a common cause of injury. A good pair of running shoes will bend easily, have shock absorbing material in the heel, and most importantly feel comfortable.

Start by walking briskly and work your way up to jogging and then running. Alternate between walking, jogging, and running, to help build up your stamina. Always warm up with walking at the beginning of your run and cool down by walking a few minutes as well. Remember to drink plenty of water before, during (if you are running for over 45 minutes) and after your run. Finally, always stretch after your run. Stretching helps to get rid of lactic acid, which is what gives you sore muscles.

#### **Proper Form:**

The concept of running is simple enough; put one foot in front of the other and GO! However, proper form will enable you to get the most out of your run and minimize your chance of injury.

**Posture** – Keep your posture straight and erect, making sure that your shoulders are level and that you are not leaning forward or backward as you stride. This position allows you to run most efficiently, promoting optimal lung capacity and stride length. Be sure to check your posture occasionally, if you find yourself starting to slump correct it as this “slouching” can lead to neck, shoulder, and lower back pain.

**Relax** – Being tense while running reduces efficiency. Your arms, hands, and face should all be relaxed.

**Stride and Impact** – When your foot comes down be sure to land mid-foot and then roll through the front of your toes. Landing on your toes will cause your calves to tighten up and fatigue quickly and landing on your heel means your stride was too long, which could cause injury. Also, take short light fluid steps each time you lift your foot, which will reduce impact. The softer you are landing, the more efficiently you are running.

**Arms** – While running your arms should pump symmetrically forward and back from your shoulders with your elbows bent at a 90 degree angle.

**Look Ahead** – Eyes should be focused ahead naturally, which will help keep your posture straight. Do not stare at your feet; this is unsafe because you will not be able to see what's coming ahead.

**Breathe Deeply** – Your lungs will work most efficiently if you breathe deeply from your diaphragm, not your chest.

Now that you have some general guidelines to follow, we encourage you to enjoy the weather and go outside for a nice healthy run!

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