

# GET YOUR BODY READY TO RUN

How to start running for health, fitness and pleasure – and stick with it

Busy? We get it. Haven't exercised since last January, or even the January before that? No problem. Starting a running programme (and sticking with it) is easier than you think. But first things first: you need to get your body – and your head – prepped for running.

'The biggest mistake newbies make is running as far as they can on their first run,' says Kathy McQuaide of the Sport Science Institute of South Africa. 'Do this, and you probably won't be able to walk for the next few days and your running shoes will be tossed to the back of the cupboard for good.' McQuaide suggests starting your running training with walking.

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## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Running 5 km within two months is a realistic goal, even for a couch potato. If you gradually add distance and time each week, you'll ease yourself onto the road with confidence and without injury. Running requires relatively little in the way of equipment: a decent pair of running shoes and a sense of commitment, and you're good to go anywhere, any time. Apart from the joy of running, you can gain many benefits from this form of exercise: losing or maintaining weight; improving your cardiovascular health, which means you're lowering your chances of heart disease and stroke; building bone density and muscle strength; and enhancing your mood naturally.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- **A beginner's training programme**  
We have made a beginners 5km running programme available to you on the Healthy Company website and app.
- **A good pair of running shoes**  
Running doesn't take much investment in gear and accessories, but you do need good shoes. Running shoes are designed to help your feet strike the ground properly, reducing the amount of shock that travels up your legs. It's also best to buy your shoes at a speciality running shop, where trained experts are on hand to guide you on the best shoe for the distances and terrain you prefer.
- **A fitness tracker and heart rate monitor**  
Of course you can start running without one but, if used correctly, a fitness tracker can be a brilliant aid for would be to get fit without getting injured. Running too far or too fast before your body is ready, is one of the most common causes of running injuries like runner's knee, shin splints and IT band syndrome. You can stay injury-free by gradually building up the time you spend walking and running, increasing the time by no more than 10% from week to week. Stiffness in your legs and lower back is normal after beginning any new exercise programme, but sharp pain that worsens with running, or intensifies after stopping could be an indication of an injury. In this case, it's best to see a doctor or physiotherapist for advice before continuing.

## TIPS TO STAY MOTIVATED

- Listen to your favourite music while you train.
- Pick the most convenient time of day to exercise. Early in the morning is usually best. Set out your exercise gear the night before, set your alarm clock and place it out of reach so that you need to get out of bed to switch it off.
- Eat a small snack before your run to keep your energy levels up and avoid feeling sluggish. Good options would include a piece of fruit and a complex carbohydrate, like a wholewheat cracker with fat-free cottage cheese.
- Once you've hit the road, listen to your body. Take regular walk breaks before you feel you need them. Regular walking intervals will ensure you finish your workout feeling strong.
- Be patient with your progress. When you first begin exercising, you won't see changes on the scale or in the mirror. You will see changes if you are consistent.
- It may take up to a month before you begin to notice a difference in yourself, and up to three months before you start receiving compliments at the office!

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