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**SHE'S NOT ALONE:**  
Thirteen million women  
are regularly on the run.





# **GET A RUNNING START!**

Running usually elicits a love-it-or-hate-it response. Some women couldn't imagine doing it unless they were being chased, while others eagerly sign up for race after race. But since it's one of the most efficient, accessible workouts, hitting the road (or treadmill or trail) could be your key to scoring a healthy heart and a lean body. Follow this easy guide—full of expert secrets and tips—to ensure you get the very most out of it.

**BY CINDY KUZMA PHOTOGRAPHS BY RANDI BEREZ**



If you're thinking about taking up running, just know you'll be in good company—and a lot of it. It's arguably the most popular form of exercise, with about 13 million women regularly hitting the road, trail, or treadmill, according to a report by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association.

Most women get into it as a way to lose weight or shape up, which we totally understand: Running burns about 100 calories per mile, builds strong bones, and—contrary to popular belief about wrecking your knees—can reduce your risk for arthritis. Plus, Danish researchers found that just one and a half to two hours of slow or moderate running per week can add about six years to your life.

According to the Women's National Runner Survey, which polled more than 5,500 women, 66 percent of female runners said their running habit relieves stress, keeps them healthy, and allows them to meet personal goals and overcome challenges. (It's hard to match that “runner's high” effect you feel the first time you run for 30 minutes nonstop or cross the finish line of a race.) “Almost every time you go out there, you can accomplish something new,” says Carl Leivers, a running coach in Atlanta—whether that's running an extra minute longer, tackling a hill without stopping, or just having a more positive attitude while you're hoofing it.

Despite this rosy picture, plenty of women can barely tolerate running—let alone find a love for it. Their body aches, their lungs burn, and they spend the entire run cursing each and every step. That's largely because, as accessible and natural as running is, most people never learn how to break down its techniques the way they would for sports like tennis or swimming. Turns out, it's a lot more complicated than just lacing up and putting one foot in front of the other.

So here's what *Women's Health* did to help: We picked the brains of some of the best coaches and experts nationwide to uncover the keys to successful running. Whether you have never finished a full mile or are looking to jump from 5-Ks to half-marathons, their training, fueling, and injury-prevention tips will make you a better runner than ever—and yes, even help you enjoy every step.



RUNNING  
**NO.1**  
SECRET

**Use your breath to find your pace.**

All of us instinctively know how to run, but most didn't inherit an innate sense of the exact speed we can sustain. Proper pacing depends on factors like how far you're going, how fit you are, and your genetic ability—and it's a skill that takes time to hone. Even Olympic runners spend a lot of time trying to get it just right.

New runners almost always start off too fast (and then burn out). The word *running*—unlike *jogging*—is inextricably linked to *speed* in our head, says Brandon T. Vallair, owner of Run for Speed in Dallas. The “talk test” can help: Stay at a speed at which you can easily chat with a partner. If you're gasping for breath, slow down. If you can belt out the chorus to a Bruno Mars song on your iPod, pick it up a bit, but err on the side of slowness to avoid

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## Train Your Brain

Sure, your legs and lungs burn, but running is just as taxing on your brain. From making the decision to lace up to fighting through each mile, "the process of running is psychological," says Jeff Brown, Psy.D., an assistant clinical professor at Harvard Medical School. "Mentally dealing with tough spots in running is critical." Here's how to practice.

### PICTURE SUCCESS.

Athletes who visualized themselves focused and in control developed the mental toughness needed to perform well, according to a recent study. Before your run (and if your energy flags mid-route), imagine yourself running strong around the block or across the finish line.

### FIND YOUR MANTRA.

Repeat a key word or phrase during a run to reinforce positivity. Try "You've earned this," "Finish strong," or "I will."

### TRICK YOURSELF.

Sometimes the biggest hurdle is getting out the door. If you don't feel like doing a 30-minute run, tell yourself you'll go out for just five minutes. Once you're in motion, chances are you'll end up staying out much longer.

**SMILE.** Even a halfhearted grin actually makes demanding situations much more manageable, according to researchers. Plus, you'll look that much better in those photos they snap during the race.

OPENING SPREAD: SOFEE TANK, GAPFIT SPORTS BRA, BE UP SHORTS, MIZUNO SHOES, SOLEUS WATCH, THIS SPREAD: CHAMPION SPORTS BRA, LULULEMON ATHLETICA SHORTS, PUMA SHOES

running yourself into the ground. "The idea is to finish each run wanting to do a little bit more or go a little bit faster. It makes it easier to get out there the next time, because you feel like there's more to accomplish," says Leivers.

In fact, go ahead and walk if you need to: Newbies should start with three 20-minute run/walks per week. Aim to run more and walk less each week until you can run 20 to 30 minutes without stopping.

Then keep using the talk test to guide your efforts over a few weeks and months, and you'll naturally become fitter and speed up without consciously trying to run faster.

Eventually, that steady speed can become a snooze, and pushing harder can up the calorie-burning and fitness-boosting benefits. But it's also extra stressful on your body, so ease into it to avoid injury: Once you've consistently run for 20 to 30 minutes three

times a week for at least four weeks (but ideally up to three months), add one of these elements near the end of one (yes, just one) run per week: four 20-second all-out bursts, three 30-second dashes up a hill, or six sprints from driveway to driveway in your neighborhood. Alternate the high-intensity interval with at least two minutes of easy jogging. Every week or two, turn up the burn by adding 10 seconds to your fast intervals.





## Find a Perfect Partner

Running with someone is incredibly motivating. But what if your guy or BFF is the hare to your tortoise, or vice versa? Here's how to make any partnership work.

### SYNC YOUR SCHEDULES.

If you're the faster runner, align one of your regular or easier days with her harder or longer workout. But don't discuss it—it's not nice to proclaim that you're "taking it easy" if she's struggling to keep up!

### MEET AND GREET.

Do an easy warm-up together, then go your separate ways (and paces) during your workout. Meet up afterward to talk about your run. If your friend is faster, join her for her cooldown.

### GROW YOUR CIRCLE.

Go together to a group run (they are often hosted by local running stores). You'll still be holding each other accountable, you won't have to be the newbie alone, and you'll each log a quality session with athletes at your own level.

RUNNING

NO.2

SECRET



### Don't run every day.

It's true that practice and reps are two keys to success. Each run stresses your muscles, bones, joints, and ligaments; as you do it more often, they'll adapt by growing stronger and more efficient. But you can do too much of a good thing. Pounding the pavement is high-impact and repetitive, so doing it too often or too fast can increase your injury risk. The trick is to find the sweet spot in which you run enough to spark changes but also give your body enough time in between to recover. "There is a delicate

balance, and you have to find the formula that works for you," says Jennifer Gill, M.P.H.

For new runners, that goal of three runs a week is ideal. "Any less than that and it will be hard to see progress," says Gill. "You'd almost feel as if you were starting over every single time." Any more and your body may not have enough time to recover. One exception: If you haven't exercised for years, try two runs a week, but add one or two walks or bike rides.

If you're already logging three days a week (and have

been for at least six weeks), you can add a fourth day, which is probably ideal for most people—especially if you're not training for a race. As a rule, it's better to do four strong runs than to squeeze in a fifth when you're tired. "The key to improving as a runner long term is to be consistent and stay injury-free," says Leivers. And whenever you step up your running routine, be careful not to increase your total amount of running by more than 10 to 15 percent per week, says Gill. That's not just days, but minutes or miles too.





### You don't have to go long.

Measuring your runs in minutes or miles involves a bit of personal preference. Some beginners may feel "one mile" sounds much more daunting than "a 15-minute run," while a marathoner may prefer to view a long run as an 18-miler, rather than sweat over how many minutes it will take to complete. Either way, picking the right distance or duration based on your goals and fitness level is a crucial step to getting the most from every workout without overdoing it.

Another reason total time is a better clock for new runners: It takes some of the pressure off. If you are having a bad day or aren't feeling as great, you can slow your pace and still get your minutes in; even if it's not pretty, you'll have finished your workout. That's more motivating than having to tack on extra time because you're running slower, or worse, not finishing a set mileage. Plus, you'll skip the hassle of

plotting out an exact route online or driving first to map out mile markers.

Here's another thing about mileage and minutes: To get better, you don't have to continually increase them. In fact, if you've hit a happy place of around three to four miles three or four times a week, that's a great range for maintaining fitness. To see even better results, keep the duration the same but increase the intensity (and total calorie burn) by interjecting intervals—such as, say, one minute at an uncomfortably quick pace, followed by one to two minutes at a conversational speed.

If you have your eyes set on a half- or full marathon, of course you'll need to dial up your distance, but make sure you do it slowly. Start by designating just one run each week as your long run, and add a mile or two to it while keeping the rest of your week the same. From there, you can lengthen any or all of your runs, following Leivers's rules: Every other week, increase your total weekly mileage by no more than the number of days per week you run (for instance, three miles a week if you're running three days). And keep your long run to no more than half your weekly total to prevent overdoing it during any one outing.

## RUN FOR A REASON

**Can't find the motivation to start running for yourself? How about doing it to help someone else?**

This fall, join *Women's Health's* second annual 10-K race, Run 10 Feed 10. Through a partnership with The FEED Foundation, we're making it possible to help fight domestic hunger by doing something good for yourself. When you register at [run10feed10.com](http://run10feed10.com), you instantly provide 10 meals to those going hungry in your local and surrounding neighborhoods. (You'll also snag a sweet, limited-edition FEED bag.) Join us in New York on September 22, 2013, hook up with one of our fun runs throughout the country, or plot your own 10-K course wherever you are. Visit the website for more details—you'll find a training plan, a free iPhone app you can download to help track your progress, and information about raising even more money to end hunger.



## HIT YOUR STRIDE

Golfers spend years perfecting their swing, but the average runner never takes lessons on proper form. That's too bad, because the right technique can ultimately help you become faster and more biomechanically efficient, and have fewer injuries. No need to overhaul everything at once: On each run, focus on one or two of these cues to become a better runner from head to toe.

### To Start

- Point your feet straight ahead.
- Look forward and keep your head parallel to the ground—imagine balancing a plate on it. ► Bend your arms to angles of 90 degrees or less.
- Lean forward from your ankles; don't bend from your waist. ► Keep your knees soft.

### In Midair

- Don't swing your hips from side to side. (You're running, not salsa dancing!) ► Swing your arms straight back and forth; don't cross your body's central line. ► Keep your shoulders back and relaxed. ► Think of bending your knees and flexing your ankles to form 90-degree angles.

### Back on the Ground

- Shorten your stride. (Your feet should land underneath your hips.) ► Speed up your cadence. (Count how many times one foot hits the ground; aim for 85 to 90 times per minute.) ► Land on the middle of your foot, not your heel. ► After your foot hits the ground, think about squeezing your glutes as you pull your leg back.



# DECODE ACHES AND PAINS

Injuries sideline as many as 75 percent of runners each year. Some pain is normal when you first start, but look out for things that change how you move, says Jordan D. Metz, M.D., a New York sports physician and marathoner: "If you're running differently because your knees or hamstrings hurt, have it checked out." And see your doctor if you have pain that lasts longer than a few days or keeps you up at night—especially if you spot it on this chart of common culprits.

↓ INJURY	Spot It	Likely Culprit	Prevent It	Treat It
<b>Patello-femoral Pain Syndrome</b> (a.k.a. runner's knee)	Soreness under your kneecap	Weak or inflexible hips or quads	Strength-train twice a week; foam-roll your hips and thighs.	Ice for 15 minutes post-run; take ibuprofen or another anti-inflammatory.
<b>Shin Splints</b>	Achy pain in the lower legs, usually the inside	Too much training too soon—or a quirk in your body's structure—overloads your bones and muscles.	Build up slowly; focus on a quick turnover or cadence (180 steps per minute).	Cross-train and ice. More stable shoes may prevent inward rolling. ✦ <b>URGENT CARE:</b> Pain in the front of your shinbone
<b>IT-Band Syndrome</b>	Pain on the outside of your knee soon after starting a run	Inflammation of the thick band of connective tissue that runs from your hip to just below your knee	Stabilize your hips by training your core and butt.	Foam-roll just above your knee for three minutes on each side daily. ✦ <b>URGENT CARE:</b> Visible swelling or a clicking sound
<b>Plantar Fasciitis</b>	Heel pain, notably first thing in the morning	Connective-tissue inflammation on the bottom of your foot	Foam-roll your calves; strengthen your feet by wearing less supportive shoes when not running.	Ice; use a golf or tennis ball to massage the bottom of your foot.
<b>Achilles Tendinitis</b>	Ache or pain in the tendon behind your ankle	Tight calves pull on the tendon.	Foam-roll your calves; strengthen them with eccentric raises (stand on a step or curb, then lift and lower your heels).	Cross-train, ice, and anti-inflammatories ✦ <b>URGENT CARE:</b> Crunchiness or a lump
<b>Stress Fracture</b>	Pain in the lower leg, foot, shin, or groin that doesn't decrease	Stress leads to a hairline bone break.	Build up slowly; make sure you get enough calcium and vitamin D.	✦ <b>URGENT CARE:</b> Always see a doctor for a fracture.



**You can totally run a race (just pick the right one).**

A record 7.6 million women crossed the finish line at road races in 2011, according to Running USA—and the finishers were all ages, shapes, sizes, and fitness levels. No matter what your current state of running, there's no reason you can't join the ranks in 2013. In fact, dropping some cash to sign up for a race can give you the motivation you need to stick to a consistent





program. Choosing the right distance, and giving yourself ample time to train for it, can make the difference between crossing the finish line strong and struggling to the end, swearing you'll never do it again (or worse, getting hurt before you even reach the starting line).

Brand-new runners do best when they target the 5-K (3.1 miles) or 10-K (about 6.2), even if they actually have their eye on a half- or full marathon. For your first race, pick something that is fun or supports a cause you believe in (see "Run for a

Reason," page 171). Budget about eight weeks to train for a 5-K and at least 10 to 12 weeks to safely tackle a 10-K, recommends Gill.

Another way to pick your prime distance: Log your runs on paper or electronically, says Vallair, then look back over the past three to six months. If you regularly ran 10 miles or fewer a week, you're primed for a 5-K; 10 to 20, you're ready to take on a 10-K training schedule; 20 to 30, you're prepared for half-marathon training; and 30 or more sets you up to start marathon training. ■

## Fuel Your Feet

Head to any popular running path and you'll likely see packs of serious-looking striders weighed down by belts stuffed with sports bars and carb gels. Resist the urge to join them, says Susan Bowerman, R.D., assistant director of the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition. Her advice:

- ▶ If you know you'll run for 60 minutes, fuel up with a 100- to 200-calorie high-carb snack (think toast or a banana).
- ▶ Four hours before your workout, drink 12 ounces of fluid. If your urine is the shade of apple juice or darker two hours before you exercise, drink another eight to 12 ounces. If you'll be working out longer than 60 minutes, replenish with a 16-ounce sports drink every hour, or four ounces every 15 minutes—but increase that amount if you're going at a high intensity.
- ▶ If your energy tends to be low on long runs, a small taste of glucose can jolt your brain into performance mode, research shows. Eat or drink 30 to 60 grams of carbs per hour. Sports chews (like Honey Stinger Organic Energy Chews, \$2.19, [honeystinger.com](http://honeystinger.com)) can keep your portions under control.
- ▶ Consider giving yourself two hours after a full meal before heading out for a long or hard run. It takes about that long for blood to reroute to your working muscles from your digestive system.
- ▶ Your daily diet can have a big impact on your run. Focus on fruits and veggies, whole grains, healthy fats from nuts and avocado, and lean protein. Fruit and veggies are also high in antioxidants, which aid recovery.
- ▶ Within an hour of your run, grab a snack with a four-to-one ratio of carbs to protein (try eight ounces of chocolate milk). This balance jump-starts the repair process.