

TIME TO DUST OFF THE COLD AND HIT THE ROAD RUNNING...



A discussion about Return to Running and Overuse Injuries

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As a very average short distance runner, I will confess that my running is like a polar bear. Well, not literally - but it does like to go into hibernation during the winter...only to be rudely awakened by the arrival of spring. It's like a daisy-shaped alarm clock that motivates me to hit the road running.

Like most humans, I then want to fly out of the blocks and continue right where I left off – you know, doing the Park Run in 30 min...even after the 3-month hiatus! The body is an amazing 'machine' that is capable of incredible feats, but we must give it time to get back into shape.

The most important thing is:

YOU WILL DEFINITELY RUN INTO TROUBLE IF YOU DO TOO, MUCH TOO SOON!

Overuse injuries are most often caused by training errors which include: rapid acceleration of the intensity, duration and frequency of your activity.

Poor technique, body alignment, old injuries, incomplete rehabilitation and sudden changes (e.g. new shoes, technique or terrain) can also contribute.

And if you think this is not for you, the latest statistics tell us that: "Up to 70% of recreational and competitive runners sustain overuse injuries during any 12-month period".

Wow! That's a very high percentage of you guys that are running past me in the mornings... So, how do you wake up the Polar Bear without hurting yourself? (a.k.a My Spring Running Action Plan).

I have come across a few simple rules that have kept me and others injury-free after a long running break.

#1. The 10% RULE of exercise:

As a rule of thumb – don't increase your exercise programme by more than 8 - 10% in one week.

There is an interrelation between distance/time and intensity – if you always run 5 km in 30 min (6 min/km)

and you increase your speed to 5:30 min/km you cannot increase the time that you train as well.

#2. The 7-4-2 RULE:

- You are allowed to exercise 7 days of the week
- No more than 4 days of the same discipline
- Only 2 out of 4 of the above-mentioned sessions may be back-to-back.

Physical stress, like simple exercise and activity, is beneficial for your body – it makes the structures stronger. This process, called remodelling, involves both the breakdown and building up of tissue. There is a fine balance between the two, if the breakdown occurs more rapidly than the building up, an overuse injury will occur. Your body can cope with 2 days of build-up, but not 3. To make sure you don't overload, add cross-training to spice up your week.

Cross-training can include strength training (gym/specific exercises), agility drills, and rhythmical (proprioceptive) exercise. Many runners have also benefitted from Pilates/ Yoga or other forms of cardio fitness such as spinning/ cycling or swimming. If you are currently nursing an injury, this is also a great way to keep your fitness levels up.

Hope to see you on the road!

For a list of references, please email: info@physiofirst.co.za



7-4-2 RULE:

- # You are allowed to exercise 7 days a week.
- # You are allowed to do the same type of exercises 4 times a week.
- # Only 2 out of the 7 sessions of the same discipline may be on consecutive days.