

Insider tips to prevent injuries

TRAINING

Physiotherapist **Michelle Lacey** tells you everything you need to know to keep you fighting fit and injury-free on your training journey



Find the right balance between your training load and what your body is capable of. PICTURE POSED



If you have signed up to this year's 2020 Vhi Women's Mini Marathon – well done! Whether you are going to walk, jog or run, ideally you would like to minimise your risk of injury in order to help maximise your potential and success rate for this event. The Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP) is a proud partner of the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon, and so here are some tips to help prevent injury while on your training journey.

ADDRESS ANY PREVIOUS INJURIES

When embarking on any training programme the biggest factor that may cause an injury is a history of a previous injury, especially one in the past 12 months. Therefore if you have suffered an injury in the past 12 months and feel you have not fully recovered or returned to your normal participation in sport or activity, it would be wise to see a physiotherapist before increasing your training.

THE FITT PRINCIPLE

While there are no strict and rigid rules when it comes to training progression and structure, there are guidelines people can implement to reduce the risk of injury. For example, the FITT principle. The FITT principle encompasses four different aspects of training, including the following:

- **FREQUENCY:** How often are you training?
- **INTENSITY:** How hard are your training sessions?
- **TIME:** How long you are you training for?
- **TYPE:** The activity you are doing, ie walk/run and/or other cardiovascular exercise and strengthening.

Eighty percent of running injuries are thought to be due to training errors such as the incorrect training volume, intensity and/or frequency and importantly – inappropriate rest! Therefore, thinking of the 10pc guideline could also be followed. This means you try to avoid increasing

any of the FITT principle elements more than 10pc per week and if possible try to increase your volume (total distance) first before your intensity. One way to increase intensity is by using a

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rate of perceived exertion (RPE) scale. This scale suggests you score your effort level from 0 (no effort) to 10 (maximal effort) when considering its intensity. A low intensity workout (for example a long slow one) may be rated approximately 2-4/10 and a high intensity workout (for example a speed workout) may be rated approximately 6-7/10.

BALANCE

A key concept when training for any event and trying to prevent injury is to ensure you find the right balance between your training load and what your body is capable of. If you put your body under too much stress too quickly, you run the risk of picking up an injury. Make sure to plan sleep and 'downtime' with friends and/or family into your schedule.

Everybody's sleep requirements are different but we need sleep to re-energise and re-charge our bodies, to be able to perform the next day. It is important to factor in other stressors your body may be feeling and not just training, such as emotional, hormonal (for example the menstrual cycle or menopause) and lack of sleep. These can all take their toll on our bodies.

Never exercise or train if you are unwell or sick. If you have missed your 'training days', do not attempt to catch up on lost time. This can cause further injury and result in a longer period off running.

TRAIN SMART

Make sure to plan recovery days in your schedule and try to include a full rest day in your weekly schedule. Ideally, you would like to be fresh for your higher intensity days and require an element of recovery after these days, therefore aim to have

a hard training day followed by an easy training day. A good option is cross training, for example cycling or swimming on your easy days. Strength training can reduce injuries by up to 50pc and can improve performance, however it should be based on individual need. Seek the advice of a physiotherapist for an individualised strength training plan.

Make sure to eat a balanced diet to match your training needs and limit alcohol consumption. Errors in these areas means your body will not be getting the correct fuel to train.

DON'T IGNORE YOUR PELVIC FLOOR

Many women may suffer from incontinence at some stage of their life. This may be especially true for those who have recently given birth and recent published guidelines advise refraining from running until at least three months after giving birth. The impact of running may cause a woman's pelvic floor muscles to get weak, therefore some women may benefit from specific strengthening exercises to assist with any pelvic floor issues such as incontinence. Be sure to consult your chartered physiotherapist should you have any pelvic floor issues.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

While it is good to stress your body in order to have a training effect, the theory 'no pain no gain' does not always apply. Severe pain during running, or pain and/or swelling that lasts beyond 24 hours could be suggestive of overload, and if you are experiencing these symptoms regularly you should seek the advice of a physiotherapist. Finally, enjoy and best of luck!



Physiotherapists treat the runners in the injury tent