

Fact Sheet

Couch to 5k

The Physical Benefits of Running

The benefits of running are astounding. It is a sport that almost anyone can do, and is beneficial to your health. Here are some statistics about the physical benefits of running that might convince you to start running:

- Prevents muscle and bone loss caused by aging.
- Helps fight disease by creating a higher concentration of white blood cells which boost the immune system.
- Raises HDL; your good cholesterol.
- Strengthens the heart and lowers blood pressure.

The Psychological Effects of Running

Not only does running help out your body physically, it also helps your mind.

- Builds confidence and character
- Relieves stress
- Improves mood
- Provides a sense of empowerment

Finding Your Motivation to Run

The toughest part of running is being able to do it with your own willpower and self accountability. Luckily, there are many different ways to motivate yourself to get from your couch to a 5k!

Write it down: Keeping a journal, utilizing a mobile app or website to report your distances, times, and feelings. It is a great way to visibly see yourself improve.

Set personal goals: Whenever we have goals, our motivation to complete them always increases. Maybe your goal is to run without stopping for 5 minutes, or to run/walk for 1 mile. Whatever it is, when your goal is something that you have decided you want to achieve and not something that someone else wants you to achieve, you are more likely to be motivated to accomplish your goal.

Reward yourself: Rewards do not have to be extravagant. They can be as simple as going out for a favorite meal, a new shirt, a new DVD, or even an iTunes music download.



How to Get Started

Beginning a running or walking program can be difficult if you do not have a plan. The run/walk method is very simple. After you have warmed up with a 5 minute walk, run for a short segment and then take a walk break. Beginners can alternate very short run segments such as thirty seconds of running followed by 4 minutes of walking. Keep repeating this pattern until you have reached your goal distance or time. For example, if you want to run/walk for 15 minutes, you can run/walk at a 30 second/4 minute ratio for about 3 cycles. As the running portion becomes easier, you can increase your time spent running and decrease your time walking. Once you have worked up to a 2 minute run/5 minute walk, you should consider training for a local 5k race. This training program can be found at www.fromcouchto5k.com.

Helpful Tips

- Purchase a good pair of walking/running shoes; they do not have to be expensive. If you are not sure what to buy, running specialty stores are great at showing you what you need based on your gait, stride, and running experience.
- Stretch after every workout to avoid injuries.
- Do not push yourself too hard when you run, go at a comfortable pace.
- Hydrate properly and energize yourself with a light protein snack, such as a cheese stick, or a handful of trail mix at least an hour before you run.
- Keep adjusting your short term goals as you achieve them so you are always striving to improve.