



# Common Running Injuries and How to Avoid Them



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Do you love running? Or maybe you're thinking about getting started but are concerned about the risk of injury. Whether you're an expert or a beginner, running has many health benefits, including weight loss, improved heart health, and better mood. By taking precautions, you can reap these rewards while helping to prevent running injuries.

## Common Running Injuries

About 80% of running injuries happen due to overuse, when repetitive stress on bones, tendons, and joints leads to damage. Knees, ankles, hamstrings, shins, and feet are common places to have an overuse injury.

Some [common types of running injuries](#) include:

- **Runner's knee:** Patellofemoral pain syndrome, commonly known as runner's knee, causes pain just behind or next to the kneecap. Discomfort often begins as mild pain that can worsen over time, especially when you put pressure on your knee.
- **Iliotibial band syndrome:** The iliotibial band, or IT band, is a long piece of tissue that connects your outer hip to your knee. IT band syndrome happens when the IT band repetitively rubs against the leg bone, causing sharp pain on the outer part of your leg just above the knee.
- **Shin splints:** Also known as medial tibial stress syndrome, shin splints cause pain along the shinbones in your lower legs. This injury frequently occurs when you increase your running volume too quickly.

- **Plantar fasciitis:** The bottom of your foot contains a thick layer of tissue called fascia, which acts as a spring when you walk or run. Over time, intense running can lead to pain in your heel and the middle of your foot that can worsen after prolonged activity.
- **Stress fractures:** Repetitive stress can cause hairline cracks to form in bones. Runners often get stress fractures in the heel, lower leg or top of the foot.
- **Achilles tendinitis:** When your Achilles tendon, which connects your calf muscle to your heel, becomes inflamed, it can cause pain and swelling in your lower leg.
- **Ankle sprains:** A sprain can result when you overstretch the muscle between your ankle and leg, which often happens by landing on the outside of your foot.

## Treatment and Prevention

If you experience pain that worsens or keeps you from running, you should check in with your doctor. Treatment for running injuries can vary but often include:

- Taking anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin or ibuprofen
- Resting the injured area
- Stretching and strengthening exercises
- Physical therapy

You can also take steps to help prevent injury before you run. These include:

- Warming up: Stretch before you begin your run and start slowly.
- Using proper technique: Consult a coach to ensure good running form.
- Wearing appropriate shoes: Make sure your shoes are designed for running.
- Increasing gradually: By slowly increasing your speed and minutes, you can help your body adapt.
- Running on soft surfaces: Running on grass, sand, gravel or rubber tracks is easier on your joints than on pavement.
- Mixing up your routine: Give your joints a break by cross-training and including low-impact exercise like swimming or biking in your weekly routine.

Have a running injury? The orthopedic specialists at Union Health can help.

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