

(Link: www.nhs.uk/)[Health A to Z \(Link: \[www.nhs.uk/health-a-to-z/\]\(http://www.nhs.uk/health-a-to-z/\)\)](#)[NHS services \(Link: \[www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/\]\(http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/\)\)](#)[Live Well \(Link: \[www.nhs.uk/live-well/\]\(http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/\)\)](#) I

Knee pain and other running injuries

Running injuries can affect anyone, from experienced runners who push themselves hard, to beginners whose muscles are not used to running.

Whatever your injury, it's important to listen to your body. Do not run if you're in pain, and only start running again when you have recovered sufficiently.

Below are 5 of the most common running injuries. Find out how to spot the symptoms, what causes the injuries, and what to do if you get one, including when to get medical help.

You'll also find tips on how to avoid becoming injured in the first place, such as choosing the right shoes and warming up properly.

1. Knee pain

Knee pain, also called runner's knee, can have many causes, such as swelling under the kneecap.

What does runner's knee feel like?

During your run, you may develop pain at the front of the knee, around the knee, or behind the kneecap. The pain may be dull, or it could be sharp and severe.

What should I do about runner's knee?

To help knee pain when you're at home, try holding ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel on the painful area for up to 20 minutes, a few times a day. Never put ice directly on your skin.

If the pain is severe or the knee is swollen, see a GP straight away.

If your knee pain is not severe, stop running and get it checked by a GP or physiotherapist if the pain does not go away after a week.

They can also recommend stretches or exercises to help you recover.

Can I still run with a painful knee?

Do not run if you have pain in your knee. If you still feel pain after a week's rest, see a GP or physiotherapist.

How soon you can start running again will depend on the cause of your knee pain and how severe it is. A GP or physiotherapist can advise you.

Try these knee exercises for runners (Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/knee-exercises-for-runners/).

2. Achilles pain

The achilles tendon is the tough, rubbery cord at the back of the ankle that links the muscle to the bone.

Regular running can cause wear and tear to the tendon over time.

What does achilles pain feel like?

You may have pain and swelling at the back of the ankle or heel. The pain may be minor but continuous, or it could be sudden and sharp. It may be worse first thing in the morning.

What should I do about achilles pain when I run?

To treat achilles pain at home, apply wrapped up ice to the area if you can feel a lump there (never put ice directly on your skin). You can also gently massage the area with your fingers.

You could also try using heel wedges in your shoes. Get advice about this from a sports or running shop.

See a GP or a physiotherapist if you have achilles pain that does not disappear after 2 to 3 weeks.

If you have a sudden, sharp pain, your achilles tendon may have torn. See a GP straight away if this is the case.

Can I still run with achilles pain?

A sharp pain will stop you running altogether. Even if the pain is not severe, it's a good idea to rest until the pain goes, and get it checked if it does not go away.

3. Shin pain

Shin pain occurs on the front of the leg, below the knee. It's often referred to as shin splints.

What do shin splints feel like?

Runners are often aware of a dull pain in the shin, but carry on running.

But this can cause increasing damage to the area, which can lead to a sudden sharp pain that stops you running altogether.

What should I do about shin pain?

Pain can be relieved by applying wrapped up ice to the area regularly for the first few days (never put ice directly on your skin).

See a GP or a physiotherapist if the area is swollen, the pain's severe, or it does not improve in a few weeks.

Can I still run with shin splints?

Shin pain is likely to stop you running for a while. Take a break for a few weeks before beginning again slowly.

Find out more about shin splints (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/shin-splints/)

4. Heel pain

Pain or swelling in the heel or bottom of the foot can occur if you suddenly start doing a lot more running, run uphill, or your shoes are not supportive enough or are worn out.

The medical name for heel pain is plantar fasciitis (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/plantar-fasciitis/).

What does runner's heel pain feel like?

Heel pain is often sharp and occurs when you put weight on the heel. It can feel like someone's sticking something sharp in your heel, or as if you're walking on sharp stones.

What should I do about heel pain?

Applying wrapped up ice to the area can help. You can do this by freezing a small bottle of water, placing it on the floor and rolling it back and forth under your foot for about 15 to 20 minutes. Never place ice directly on your skin.

Stop running and see a GP straight away if there's a lot of swelling in the heel or the area under your foot. Otherwise, see a GP if the pain does not go away.

Can I still run with a painful heel?

You will not be able to run with heel pain. If you treat the pain early enough, it'll normally go away in a few weeks, after which you should be able to start running again.

Find out more about heel pain (Link: www.nhs.uk/symptoms/foot-pain/heel-pain/)

5. Muscle strains

Common strains caused by running are in the hamstring muscles (which run down the back of the thigh) or calf muscles.

Strains often affect new runners, whose muscles are not used to running.

What does muscle strain feel like?

The pain of a muscle strain is often sudden and feels as if someone has kicked you in the area of your calf or hamstring.

What should I do about a muscle strain?

Most strains can be treated at home. Stop running immediately and apply ice to the painful area up to 20 minutes a few times a day (do not put ice directly on your skin).

Keeping your leg elevated and supported with a pillow will help reduce swelling.

Find out more about treating strains (Link: www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/treatment/)

Can I still run with a muscle strain?

You will not be able to run with a muscle strain. The time it takes for a strain to heal and for you to start running again can take months, depending on how severe the muscle strain is.

Tips for preventing injury

Wear the right shoes

It's important to buy the correct running shoes, and it's best to go to a running shop to get fitted. But you do not have to spend a lot of money.

Expensive shoes may just be more durable and lightweight, so more suitable for people running long distances. All running shoe brands make cheaper versions that are suitable for beginners.

Warm up and cool down

It's essential to warm up properly before you start running. Five to 10 minutes of brisk walking or gentle jogging before you start will warm your muscles up and help prevent injury.

To cool down, carry on running at an easier pace or walk for 5 to 10 minutes. This will help your body recover after your run.

Build up slowly

Do not be tempted to increase the intensity or distance of your running too quickly. Do a similar run at least 3 or 4 times before you increase your pace or distance.

The Couch to 5K plan (Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/) is perfect as it builds up the distance gradually. The plan is suitable for beginners and will get you running 3 times a week, building up to 5km in 9 weeks.

Staying motivated if you have an injury

Being injured can be very frustrating. If you're new to running, you might be tempted to give up at the first sign of injury.

Having a specific goal, such as a 5km race or charity run, will help you stay motivated through injury.

If you have something to work towards, you'll be much more likely to get back into running once you've recovered.

Running with a partner is also a great way to stay motivated. If they carry on running while you're injured, you'll want to get back out there once you're better as you will not want to let them down.

More in Exercise (Link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/)

Why exercise is important

Benefits of exercise (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits/>)

Why we should sit less (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/why-sitting-too-much-is-bad-for-us/>)

Exercise guidelines

Physical activity guidelines for adults aged 19 to 64 (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/>)

Physical activity guidelines for older adults (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/>)

Physical activity guidelines for children and young people (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/>)

Physical activity guidelines for children (under 5 years) (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years/>)

Fitness advice for wheelchair users (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/wheelchair-users-fitness-advice/>)

Strength and flexibility exercises

How to improve your strength and flexibility (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/how-to-improve-strength-flexibility/>)

Strength and Flex exercise plan: How-to videos (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flex-exercise-plan-how-to-videos/>)

Balance exercises (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/balance-exercises/>)

Sitting exercises (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>)

Strength exercises (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/>)

Flexibility exercises (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/>)

Exercises for sciatica problems (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercises-sciatica-problems/>)

Running and aerobic exercises

How to warm up before exercising (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/how-to-warm-up-before-exercising/>)

How to stretch after exercising (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/how-to-stretch-after-exercising/>)

Knee exercises for runners (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/knee-exercises-for-runners/>)

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Walking for health (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/>)

Fitness studio exercise videos

About our Fitness studio videos (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/about-our-videos/>)

Aerobic exercise videos (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/aerobic-exercises/>)

Strength and resistance exercise videos (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-resistance/>)

Pilates and yoga exercise videos (Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/pilates-and-yoga/>)

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