



Health & Wellbeing



Zoe Birch is a Chartered Physiotherapist and founder of PhysioMotion, which operate a clinic at Green Park as well as providing physiotherapy at home. We remain truly grateful for Zoe's contributions to our magazine, and for the runners out there in SEBRALAND, here is some essential advice to keep you on track.

HOW CAN I STAY INJURY-FREE FOR A RACE?

If you are currently injury free, the physiotherapist can help you stay that way by advice on planning your training, providing supportive exercise programmes for running and injury prevention advice.

When preparing for a running event here are a few things that you need to consider:

1. BASELINE FITNESS

Whether you are an avid runner or just starting out, this needs to be taken into consideration when planning to take part in an event.

To undertake a marathon your muscles need to be able to propel your body along undulating terrain for four to five hours.

Park Runs - An achievable goal.



Those who are fresh-faced to marathon training are unlikely to have the baseline strength or endurance for this feat.

When the cumulative demands on a tendon or muscle exceed its capacity, this is when muscle tears and tendinopathies occur.

Most good training programmes strongly recommend cross-training (combination of running, low impact activities such as swimming and strengthening and mobility exercises) to mix up the demands placed on the body for this exact reason.

2. YOUR GOAL

Most people don't start by trying to run a marathon. Your local 5k Park Run or a half marathon may be a more achievable and a realistic goal. When choosing an event you need to ask yourself: what is my overall goal for the event?

Is it getting a PB - or just getting across the finishing line?

Once you've decided on a goal you need to think about how much training is needed to be able to achieve it. If you are not accustomed to running and want to complete a 5k, we would normally suggest an interval programme (combination of running and walking) over six to 12 weeks. Whereas if you're considering a half marathon, you may need up to 20 weeks to train for it, depending on your baseline fitness.

3. TRAINING PLAN

Typically, we would suggest:

- Running two to three times per week with different aims for each run
- Strength and conditioning (e.g. gym based exercises) one to two times per week
- Rest two days per week
- Each element of this training regime is equally important, so make time for all of them, but avoid doing the same activity twice on consecutive days - for example leaving all your running until the weekend!

There are a few other simple principles, which, if followed, can help with injury prevention:

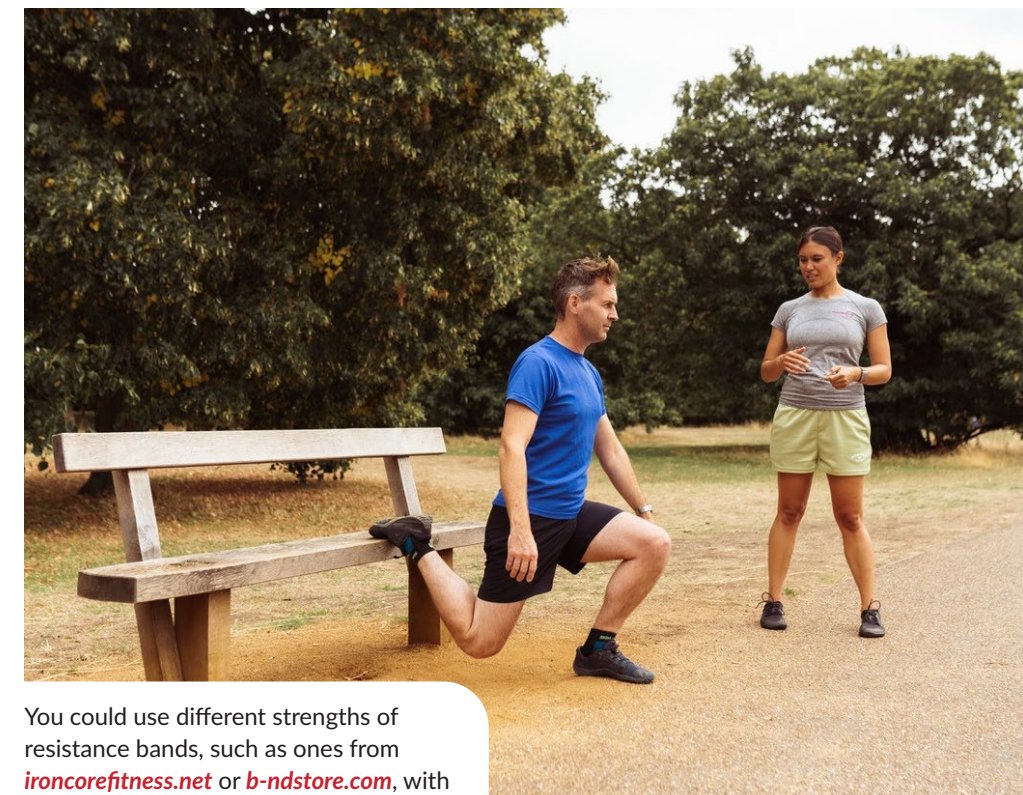
- Don't increase your overall running distance or your weight training for the week by more than 10%
- Avoid a stop-start, 'boom or bust' training cycle
- Have only one goal for each run, such as running further but at a slower pace
- Give your body 24 hours' rest between a strength and conditioning session and a run session.

4. STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

For many runners, it's all about exercising outdoors, and being stuck in a gym would be their worst nightmare. But strength and conditioning your body for running faster or longer is important and it can help you avoid injuries. It doesn't have to be in a gym and with lots of equipment, however.



Plyometrics are great for improving speed.



Strength training is fundamental for injury prevention.

You could use different strengths of resistance bands, such as ones from ironcorefitness.net or b-ndstore.com, with stairs or a bench in the park to get an effective workout. You need to aim your workout at the muscle groups in your legs, such as your quadriceps, gluteals, hamstrings and calves.

5. TRAINING SHOES

The first thing to remember is that there is no one running trainer that is perfect for everyone. You need a training shoe which will complement your running pattern.

We spoke to podiatrist Amanda Walker at Gait Lab (www.thegaitlab.co.uk), and she told us that she normally recommends Asics, Brooks and New Balance, but suggests it's sensible to trial a few different types and brands to see how they feel. If a trainer doesn't feel responsive, then it's generally not going to encourage you to use it for running.

6. RECOVERY

Yes, it is OK to have a rest day. Actually it is really important to enable your body to fully recover and repair itself after the load and stress you have placed upon it from running and strengthening sessions.

A lot of running-related injuries come about from inadequate rest and overtraining. If you start to get a persistent pain or ache, it may be your body's way of telling you to stop and perhaps run a shorter distance, or swap for an activity that puts less load on your body, such as cycling or swimming.

Also, it's important to get between seven and nine hours of sleep a night to allow for physical and psychological recovery.

7. NUTRITION

As my friend who is a doctor of nutrition always tells me, a colourful plate is a healthy plate. That's because different food groups provide us with different nutritional benefits.

When training for a running event or recovering from a strengthening session you need to make sure that you're getting these in the right proportions.

For muscle building and tissue repair, protein is really important in your diet. Research shows that you need from 0.75g to 1.8g of protein per kg of your body weight for muscle repair and growth.

You also need small amounts of carbohydrates pre-training to provide initial energy for your session, and more afterwards to replenish the glycogen stores in your muscles. It is not good to completely deplete your stores of glycogen and then assume that carb-loading with a huge bowl of pasta the day before your event will provide you with efficient energy.

Most importantly, you need to make sure you keep yourself hydrated before your run and rehydrate after your run.

If you have just picked your event for next year and you want to work through these principles with someone, why not contact us to make an appointment where we can tailor a programme to your needs.