THE PHYSIO CLINIC

Movement Health Performance

THE RUNNING CLINIC

How Should I Warm up and Why Is It So Important?

When you go out for a run, it is tempting to shoot out of the door at top speed! But this can be a recipe for disaster. Failing to prepare your body for exercise can increase your risk of pulling a muscle, tweaking a tendon or getting into a pace that you cannot sustain.

The key to a good warm up is to loosen up gradually. You want to gently bring your heart rate up as this will make it easier for you to get into a sustainable rhythm when you start your run.

Here are some Top Tips for warming up before you run:

Walk Before You Run!

Walking is the ideal low intensity activity to ease your body out of sitting mode and into exercise mode. It warms up the core and increases the blood flow to all the muscles you'll need for running. This is because walking takes the body through a range of movement that is akin to running.

Do You Know How to Walk Correctly?

When you walk, keep the arms long and your hands relaxed. Imagine you are holding something delicate between your finger and thumb. Your arms are what drive your legs to move. Therefore, you need to make sure you get the arms moving! Your arms should swing about 45 degrees out in front of you and you should also allow them to swing back behind you. Stand up tall and look straight ahead.

Did you know... 30 minutes a day of purposeful walking can reduce your risk in:

- **Dementia by 50%**
- **Alzheimer's by 60%**
- **Stroke by 60%**
- **And a whole range of cancers by 50%**

Warm Up Dynamically

Dynamic stretching uses controlled movements to prepare your body for exercise, rather than holding a stretch statically. Static stretching, where you hold a muscle in an elongated, fixed position for 30 seconds or more, is now **discouraged <u>before</u>** exercise. This is because it has been linked to injury and reduced performance. The dynamic exercises you incorporate into your warm up should be appropriate to the movements you would experience in your running. Give these two a go!

Leg Swings - Stand with your hands on your hips. Engage your core slightly, gently flex your right foot, and swing your right leg front to back. Keep your upper body still and eyes forward. Repeat both sides

Low skips – lifting opposite knee and opposite arm, gently try skipping whilst moving forward. Increase the height gradually.

Start off performing the exercises at a slow pace and through a small range and build up speed and range as you warm up.

How Should I Cool Down After My Run?

Cooling down after your run is just as important as warming up. If you skip either of these two book ends, you will miss out on an easy opportunity to progress your overall performance.

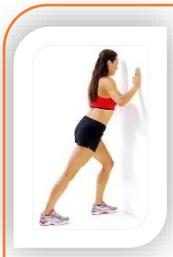
Walking is an ideal exercise to do post-run as well as before. It efficiently transitions blood flow from the working muscles back to the resting flow pattern. So, try a few minutes of brisk walking after your run!

Static Stretching

Cooling down is where your static stretches come in to play!

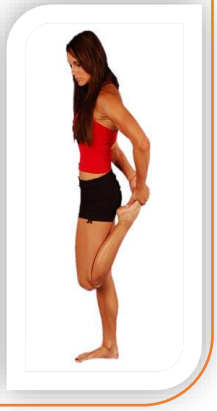
In contrast to the warm up, static stretching is most beneficial post exercise.

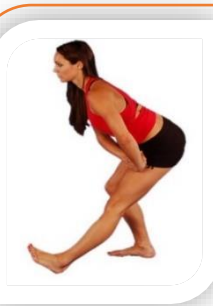
A static stretch should be held in a challenging but comfortable position for around 20-30 seconds. Give some of these a go!



Calf – Place one foot behind the other. Keep the back leg straight and lean forward. Keep the heel on the floor

Quad Stretch – Pick up one leg behind you and gently pull your foot towards your bottom. Avoid leaning forward at the hips and keep your back straight. Squeeze your glutes to feel an extra stretch





Hamstring – Place one foot forward with toe pointing up. Keep back straight and press bottom backwards while bending forwards at the hips

Hip Flexor - bring one leg back to kneel on the ground. Keep the back straight and push the hips forward

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Looking for more information?

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