



RUNTEX UNIVERSITY

MAINTENANCE

When you get into a distance running program, you are lucky to stick with it. Now that you have made it through 2 months, it is time to become an expert in how to stay with it long term. Distance running is very repetitive and works your muscle groups in a limited range of motion, which creates tightness and imbalances between opposing muscle groups and joints. Muscles work in two ways, eccentrically and concentrically. While running, the backside of your legs work concentrically to propel you along and the frontside of your legs work eccentrically to allow you to land smoothly. This causes the back of your body to gain strength faster than the front and then you get imbalances at the hips, knees and lower leg. To keep balanced in you need to stretch, lift weights, do technique drills and sprint (a relative term).

The more you run, the more you will realize the importance of stretching. I don't concentrate on it early in a training program because of information overload and stretching can be detrimental if done too much or when you are sore. You spend a lot of time sore and adjusting to new workouts when you start a program. When you are sore and tight, it is very important not to try to stretch before you are warmed up.

After you finish running you should sit down and spend ten to fifteen minutes stretching out your muscles. This should be very relaxed and without pain. I always concentrate on the lower back, hamstrings, calf muscles and then the hip area. You should be able to stretch without breathing hard and be able to hold each position for 30-60 seconds. Do your stretching in intervals like your running. Stretch for 30 seconds, rest, repeat and notice how your flexibility increase each repetition.

Lifting weights is also helpful. As we all age, we all need to lift weights to maintain muscle mass. We all face the "use it or lose it" syndrome. Weight lifting doesn't have to be high intensity or take all your time. You don't even have to use weights. The idea is to work the postural muscles. This can be done with step ups, pull ups, push ups, sit ups, bar dips, etc... It should take a total of 20 minutes to keep your muscles strong. Remember, if you are active running, you need to concentrate on your upper body. Not that weights for your legs aren't beneficial, just if you are short on time, worry about your upper body first.

Technique drills and sprints are very helpful to keep your running injury free. By doing the well established drills; sideways slides, over-and-under's, butt kicks, skips, high knees, backwards and strides, you will help train your body the proper stride. By running at a faster pace, you prepare yourself to be smooth at an easier pace.



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You must train fast once a week. It should always be under control with proper technique. It is as simple as running six lengths of the football field, one length at a time at a pace that you can maintain good form, but run fast. You will notice that after a month of this, you will start looking forward to this type of training. This should be done with a one mile jog warm-up followed by the above drills. To learn the drills, come to any of the free RunTex University classes. After the strides, jog easy for a mile and then sit down and stretch.

This sounds like a lot to do just to be a runner. If you properly balance your workouts, you will have fewer injuries, a smoother run and enjoy your varied training. Too many people give up running due to injury or boredom with what I call the "Townlake Shuffle" made up of 3 miles, 3 days a week which is much better than not exercising, but not even close to what running could be for you.

