

Common Running Complaints Explained

Running is a great sport. Many people keep physically fit and run competitively. Unfortunately, our bodies are different shapes and styles, and not everyone is ideally built to run. Fortunately, if you learn to understand your body, and what the pain from running really is, you can deal with it effectively.

A series of connecting joints including the ankle, knee and hip work from the ground up to form our foundation, similar to the foundation of a house. We call this series of joints a kinetic (motion) chain. Many runners get frustrated because of acquired painful problems, often so-called overuse syndromes due to a breakdown of the kinetic chain. Your body style (we all have different inherited body mechanics) can result in gait problems (problems with the way you walk and run) and result in foot, leg and lower and upper back soreness and pain.

Many runners often falsely believe these problems will go away on their own causing pain and some eventually stop running when they can no longer tolerate the discomfort. Since these problems are mechanical, and largely an expression of the way you are built, the underlying problems will not go away on their own and should be addressed by a health care professional who specializes in running and gait issues. These types of problems are generally exacerbated over time by trying to run through them. As a rule, if you experience significant pain while running, you should stop and walk it off. If the pain returns or does not lessen by the next time you run, stop running and have it checked by a health care professional who specializes in runners.

The body does not tolerate asymmetry well, especially when it comes to runners (usually one foot flares out more than the other affecting how your pelvis and leg works when you stride). It is therefore vitally important that people who are built asymmetrically wear shoe inserts that help improve symmetry and wear the running shoe most appropriate for their body style. If you look at your shoes and see the two sides having significantly

different wear patterns, this is a strong indicator of gait asymmetry.

A full service running store can help you select the right type of shoe for you by assessing your running gait (some stores have treadmills and record your gait) and many can offer basic advice for off the shelf inserts as well. In general, those



who have flat feet, foot flare or both should have a straight last (bottom of shoe is straighter).

COMMON RUNNING COMPLAINTS

Plantar Fasciitis –The pain is typically felt on the bottom of the foot, most commonly by the heel, arch or ball of the foot. Some describe it as

walking on stones when you wake up in the morning. This is commonly caused by tight legs, tight calves and a short stride, which can have the effect of your foot constantly slamming into the pavement as you run.

Shin Splints – Commonly caused by feet that are flat, or that turn out or a combination of both. The shins become very sore when you run and the pain can be sharp and intense. The pain is caused by the Tibialis Anterior and Posterior muscles as well as the Peroneii. These muscles are unique because they insert into the shin bone. When these muscles become overly tight, the insertions at the bone become quite sore and you will lose flexibility in the front part of the lower leg. The insertions of the muscles can become brittle and cause significant pain when running in the shins.

Calf Cramps and Achilles tendon problems– Many runners have calf cramps which will sometimes stop them from running. These types of pains actually are part of a greater issue. It usually means you have a foot that flares out and that you are short striding on that side (your leg does not push out creating a short stride). Short striding is often caused by tight gluteal and piriformis muscles in the buttock which will negatively affect the sciatic nerve and tighten the calf. If allowed to go on, this can eventually cause intense knee pain and the person may experience pulled calves and hamstrings from the tension on the structures. These same people often develop a painful Achilles tendon that is scarred and brittle. Occasionally, the Achilles may actually rupture when suddenly loaded.

Knee Pain – This is a common complaint of many people who like to run. The knee is a recipient of forces. The kneecap is important because it provides leverage to the leg because it is a pulley. If the foot turns out and the knee rolls in, many runners will experience knee pain, cracking of the knees and in some cases, a dislocated knee cap. Some people will wear a brace (holds the kneecap in place reducing soreness). Others may experience

aching under of in front of the knee while others will experience a deep ache which seems to be inside the joint. The usual causes for deep aches or pain are adhesion formation in the knee tendons and shortening of the musculature from body mechanical issues. Sometimes, if the problem is chronic enough or there is a sudden force through the knee, the knee joint itself may become damaged requiring an MRI to effectively evaluate it, however, most often, this type of diagnostic evaluation is only used if internal damage to the knee is the suspected cause of pain.

Iliotibial Band Syndrome – The Iliotibial or IT band is located on the lateral side of the upper thigh. It is a fibrous band that stabilizes the knee and upper leg, and it attaches into a thin muscle called the tensor fascia lata. This will tighten up on people who significantly under and over stride. It is a symptom of a larger problem in the gait cycle. This can be quite painful and debilitating and prevent you from running. Often a tight IT band will feel like your quadriceps are tight resulting in upper and lower back pain.

Lower Back Pain – It is a symptom of gait issues which usually include over and under striding. Often, people who get lower back pain will also get many of the other conditions listed in this brochure and at times experience upper back pain as well.

DOS AND DON'TS

What not to do –

1. Do not ignore pain, other than soreness from training. Pain means something is wrong.

What to do –

1. Use foam rollers to loosen legs and core while training.
2. Seek out the help of a qualified health care provider who understands gait mechanics.
3. Ice areas that are very sore. If you continue to see the problem worsen, see an appropriate health care provider.

4. Be sure to wear either custom or off the shelf foot orthotics if you are built asymmetrically and your shoes wear unevenly.
5. Be sure to wear the right shoes. People who over pronate should wear shoes with a straight last for the best support.

For further information, visit our web site at www.backfixer1.com. Check out Brochures On line.

Biography of author

Dr. William Charschan has been working with track and field athletes since 1992 and is the current medical director of USA Track and field. He specializes in gait problems and was trained in Myofascial Release Technique by Michael Leahy D.C., C.C.S.P., founder of Active Release Techniques®. He also uses Graston Technique, a tool based method that very efficiently improves muscular and tendon function. Dr. Charschan practices in both Scotch Plains and North Brunswick NJ and has presided at many track and field events throughout the tri state area and works with runners of many levels of competitiveness.

For further information, call



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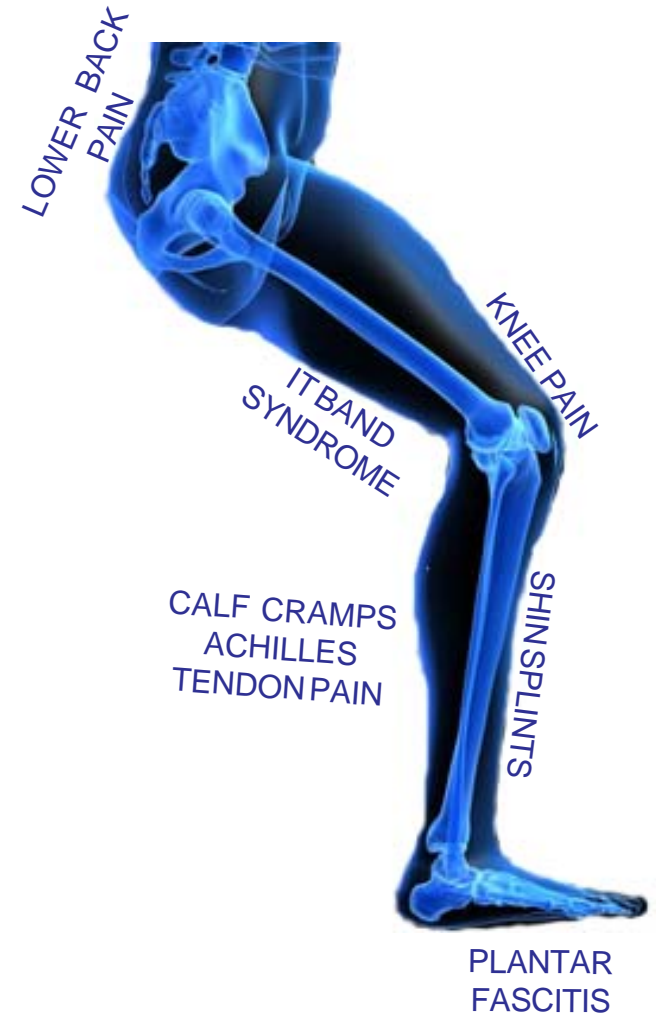
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