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TALES FROM THE POD

Esther and Holly talk injuries and recovery



Women's Running™

July 2023

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“I had to run until I saw an octopus!”

Insta queen **Nat Long** on the challenges that keep her moving

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Women's Running

Hello!

ISSUE 163 // JULY 2023



Recently, I went to a talk at a slightly dry conference entitled 'how to grow your community'. (Don't stop reading – I promise this has something to do with running.) I impatiently sat through it, subtly scrolling through the *Women's Running* Discord* chat, and looking around for the nearest exit.

On the journey back home, it struck me how lucky we are (and how useless the talk had been). How lucky our team at *Women's Running* is, how lucky I am, and how lucky us women runners are.

Because running *is* community. And no-one is more community-minded than women. Nestled between those two awesome building blocks, we don't need to grow our community; we are already part of one of the best communities in the world.

Yes, okay, small communities whirl around inside that mega one – plenty of distinct groups bash into each other, overlap, intermingle. There are the elites, the parkrunners, the Canix crew, the mum runners, the solo runners, the treadmillers, the track stars, the sub 2.30 lot, the plus 7.30 lot, the Jeffers, the once-a-weekers, the non-running runners, the run streakers, and a billion other mini communities besides.

But I would suggest that 99.5% of us feel the joy not only in our own running,

but also we know that special joy when we catch sight of other runners. We palpably *want* other people to run, and to join our crew. And every page of this magazine is dedicated to supporting, uplifting and encouraging every runner and every non-runner to feel the joy in every step.

Which leads me to this: on Sunday 24 September, *Women's Running* will have its very own wave at the London Vitality 10,000. A *whole wave* dedicated to women runners. We would love you to join us (at vitalitylondon10000.co.uk), no matter what pace you're aiming for, and show the world what the power of running can do. And then we want to meet you all and have the biggest hug to celebrate our strength, our support, and our community.

Are you with me? I know you are. Because we don't need to grow our community; it's already there.

Happy running!

Esther Newman *Editor*



SCAN TO SIGN UP FOR THE LONDON VITALITY 10,000 WR WAVE TODAY!

*Discord? It's where you can chat with a whole bunch of runners just like you. Go to patreon.co.uk/womensrunning to find out more



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WITH YOU EVERY STEP

Women's Running is your community: a supportive place for all people who identify as women who love to run. Each issue is packed with advice on training, nutrition and kit, alongside inspirational real-life runners' stories. Whether you're considering your first ever run or you regularly take part in races, *Women's Running* will help you run better. Running is about more than just putting one foot in front of the other: it's about who we are.

This month we... ...put our mental health first

By going for a run on **page 30**



...felt green

And made some proper eco promises on **page 68**



...ran in circles

And signed up to a backyard ultra on **page 92**



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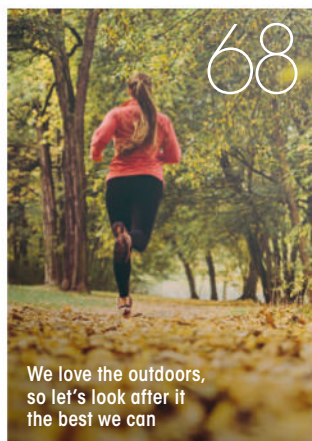
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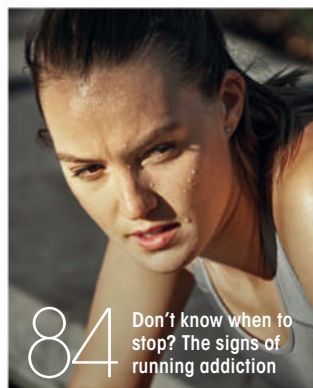
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Emma Kirk-Odunubi

Emma is a sports scientist and strength coach who has worked in the running industry for over 15 years and, with her partner, set up Bulletproof Athletic (bulletproofathletic.com) to empower runners to achieve their goals. This issue, she helps identify the cause of that nasty stabbing shin pain, and finds ways for you to prevent it happening again. Head over to **page 16** to discover more.



Lucy Waterlow

Lucy is a journalist who started running aged 10, inspired by her marathon-mad dad and elite athlete sister. She's the ghostwriter of books *Run Mummy Run*, *Nell McAndrew's Guide to Running*, and Mimi Anderson's *Beyond Impossible* and *Limitless*. She's a British Athletics coach who helps others love running as much as she does. This issue she has investigated the links between running and mental health on **page 30**.



Laura Fountain

Laura is a journalist, author and running coach. Her books *The Lazy Runner* and *Tricurious* describe her journey from reluctant runner and non-swimmer to finishing 20 marathons and an iron-distance triathlon. She coaches women-only running groups and is a tutor on England Athletics' coaching courses. This issue, she's focusing on endurance in a special ultra training plan on **page 50**.



Dr Josephine Perry

Josephine is a Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist whose purpose is to help people accomplish more than they had previously believed possible. She has published five books including: *I Can: The Teenage Athlete's Guide to Mental Fitness* and *The 10 Pillars of Success*; *The Secret Strategies of High Achievers*. This issue, Josie looks into the troubling rise in exercise addiction, and explains how to spot the signs on **page 84**.



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LIFESTYLE

Headlines // People // Food // Kit // Health // Opinion



HEADLINES

The people, campaigns, research and updates making an impact in our running community this month



lululemon's going Further to champion athletes

Sportswear brand looks to increase miles on the dial with long-distance challenge

Bravo to lululemon, and its new Further campaign, which celebrates human possibility and champions athletes. It will culminate in an ultramarathon on International Women's Day, 8 March, 2024.

Through the Further initiative, lululemon aims to elevate women's running and show what's possible when we're supported with resources typically reserved for men. Despite female

athletes having fewer opportunities to compete and limited representation in sports research, we keep pushing the boundaries of human possibility — especially in ultrarunning.

The campaign will include a six-day ultramarathon expected to involve 10 women from the brand's ambassador collective, including Camille Herron and four new ambassadors: Devon Yanko, Leah Yingling, Stefanie Flippin, and Montana Farrah-Seaton. Each of these athletes will attempt to run the furthest distance of their careers with the opportunity to set two-, three- and six-day running world records.

These women will have access to leading sport science and medicine support to inform personalised training programmes spanning physical, mental and emotional support. For the rest of us? We can compete in a three-week

Strava challenge, to run a collective 1,000,000K with a giveback that supports young women globally. We're up for this! Are you?

For more information on Further or the lululemon ambassadors taking on this challenge, visit lululemon.com/story/run-further



206,728

Wings for Life World Run participants took over 2.3 billion steps for spinal cord research

This took place across 192 nations, with 100% of the extraordinary €5.8 million raised donated to spinal cord research. Next year's 11th edition of the Wings for Life World Run will be on 5 May 2024, wingsforlifeworldrun.com

MENSTRUAL TABOOS LESSEN IN GEN-Z AND MILLENNIAL AGE GROUPS

New research by experts at the University of Nottingham and health communications agency Thrive has found that Gen Z people (born 1997-2012) are far more open about menstrual health than Millennials (born 1981-1996). However, respondents reported feeling emotionally unprepared for starting their periods; many said that their periods started unexpectedly and that their schools contributed to period taboos.

The research has been documented in a white paper called *On the Blob: Millennials vs Gen Zs talk menstrual health*. It details



how commercial brands are failing to address the issues and experiences of young women. The research found that, although openness about menstrual wellbeing and symptoms is increasing, some period products,

particularly tampons, still engender fear among younger age groups.

The research also highlighted how the impact of mood and stress-related menstrual symptoms on women's everyday lives is not widely recognised. More support is needed for symptoms beyond the period pain, cramps and heavy flow, and further guidance is needed on menstrual health and how it changes throughout different life stages.

The UK's gender health gap means women face a higher prevalence of illness, poorer health outcomes and restricted access to health services compared to men.



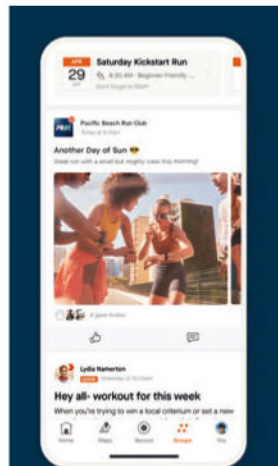
This month's brilliant runners

Jo Meek. Jo (pictured above) survived the multi-day 2023 Cape Wrath Ultra, an eight-day, 400K journey to Cape Wrath lighthouse. In fact, Jo won the women's race after holding the lead all the way from Day 2. Meek finished in 52:09:56, setting a new women's record by 45 minutes. UK runners completed the top three, with Elaine Bisson second in 55:26:32 and Jana Szczepaniak in third (58:46:47).

Iris Pessey. Iris (FRA) from Team Scott won the women's race at the Calamorro Skyrace in Andalucia, Spain. After a disappointing 2022

that saw Pessey land on the podium many times but never take home the winner's bib, this win, the first of the 2023 Skyrunner World Series, was taken in 3:21:17. The Calamorro race is a 27K coastal course that looks out over the Mediterranean, and comprises 2,000m of elevation gain.

Medina Eisa Kumanda. Medina set an incredible Under 20 World Record in the 5K at the Adidas Adizero: Road to Records 2023 event, at the Adidas HQ World of Sport campus in Herzogenaurach, Germany. Her time was a blisteringly fast 14:46.



Strava and Nike unite

Strava has announced a partnership with global brand Nike that enables members to share their activities across both platforms. Activities from the Nike Run Club and the Nike Training Club apps will soon be able to be shared to Strava, and Nike will begin hosting challenges on Strava later this summer.


This month
we love...



THE LONDON DISPENSARY BOOSTING CBD BODY BALM

£37.50, [THELONDONDISPENSARY.COM](https://www.thelondondispensary.com)
Let this plant-based hand and body balm melt into your skin after your next run, and slowly soothe your muscles. Shea butter is mixed with avocado and jojoba to moisturise and revitalise dry or itchy skin.



ARBONNE FEELFIT PROTEIN SNACK SQUARES

£34, [ARBONNE.COM](https://www.arbonne.com)

Made with real strawberries and drizzled with white chocolate flavoured icing, these vegan snack-sized chewy squares give an instant lift. Each square gives you 6g of dairy-free protein.



LUSH DEEP SLEEP MAGNESIUM EPSOM SALT CUBE

£5, [LUSH.COM](https://www.lush.com)

Simply run your bath, drop in this cube and let lavender, chamomile, and neroli oils create a soothing scent that fills the air while reviving Epsom salts restore balance to your tired muscles.



NEW GEAR

We've got light, bright, superfast – and chafe-free! – summer running sorted with this lot



▲ Taking flight this summer

Are you training for a marathon this summer? The Adidas Ultraboost Light promise to sharpen your performance while cushioning your joints and offer a 30% reduction in weight. The Boost capsules, packed into the midsole, transfer your energy back into your feet, and with a 10% lower carbon footprint, recycled ocean plastic content, Continental rubber outsoles and a knitted upper, we think you'll fly through your summertime miles in these. **£170, adidas.co.uk**



▲ Animal magic

No socks will hug your arches more than the Monkey Sox Classic X8 Sports Sox. Their rib arch support means they don't budge, extra padding on the heels and toes adds protection, and the mesh upper allows air flow to keep those hard-working feet cool. The extra compression support for your ankles is just another bonus feature in a sock that's bursting with them.

£17, monkeysox.org



▲ Top to bottom

The Tracksmith Session Tee and Lane Five Crop Tights are essential for warm-weather running. They wick away sweat, enable freedom of movement and feature a high-quality finish on every seam. The relaxed fit of the tee, with antimicrobial features, is perfect for summer and the mid-calf Lane Five Crop tights has five – yes five – pockets! If you don't like shorts, these crop tights have a soft Inverno blend to regulate heat when temperatures rise.

£78 & £118, tracksmith.com



▲ Butt covers

For runners who like a larger pant, and full cheek coverage, these Runderwear Briefs give protection without sacrificing comfort.

Runderwear offers a 100% chafe-free promise so test it out this summer!

£18, runderwear.co.uk



▲ Throwing shade

Smash your summer sessions in these Oakley Corridor frames, designed specifically for women runners. The size won't overpower your face and the frame shape feels feminine and sporty. These shades are light and comfy, and the nose pad and earsocks provide a secure fit. You've got five stunning summer colours to choose from and you can get them fitted with prescription lenses, too. **£152, oakley.com**

▲ Take it as Red

Don't head out on your summer adventures without your Red Long-Sleeve Pro Change Robe Evo. Trail festivals, open water swims, camping, dog walks, watching your kids do sports, races, drinking fizz in the evenings... this is one piece of kit that will pay you back time and again. The robe has plenty of room for changing in, as well as internal and external pockets and a lightweight fabric that's snugly and warm. There's a vibrant colour selection to choose from, and a short-sleeved option available too.

£159.95, red-equipment.co.uk



Look after my knees after a marathon?

Contrary to common belief, running can be good for your knees. Studies show it doesn't cause arthritis in later life and that, in actual fact, it may help relieve some pain for those who suffer from arthritic knees. How can you best look after your knees if you prefer running long distance?

Not only is running a great way to keep fit, it also helps improve circulation and bone density, which deteriorates as we age," says Dr Robin Chatterjee, Consultant in Musculoskeletal, Sport & Exercise Medicine at The Lister Hospital (hcahealthcare.co.uk). "It's also important to keep fit and active to ward off a number of common health problems such as type 2

diabetes, heart disease and even some cancers," he adds.

Looking after your knee health as a longer-distance runner is not just about care after the fact, Chatterjee says. Looking after your knees *after* a marathon is far too late; you need to start your care before and during your training programme, not just when you cross the finish line. Dr Chatterjee says: "Caring for your knees before, during and after a marathon will help you maintain good knee health and prevent long-term injury, particularly runner's knee."

Runner's knee is a common knee condition for runners, and usually presents itself as a dull pain on the knee cap. This can be caused by how you run, a weakness or imbalance in the muscles that support your knee, or a misalignment in your gait.

If you notice any concerns with your knees early in training this is a great time to address them. "Many problems start at the bottom, with runners not wearing the right footwear for their feet," says Dr Chatterjee. "Everyone has differently

shaped feet, and trainers are not a one-size-fits-all item. Booking an appointment with a reputable trainer shop will ensure that you have the right trainers for your feet."

Many people's natural gait puts too much pressure on the inside or outside of their foot, which needs to be corrected if you're covering lots and lots of miles. New shoes or an extra insole can sometimes fix the angle at which the foot sits.

A common cause of injury for runners is a lack of strength training. It's so important that you do enough strength training to support your body for the length of a marathon training plan. Dr

problem and ensure that it is corrected properly."

"Once you have completed your marathon, it's important to include a period of recovery," says Dr Chatterjee. "While many who run marathons are eager to keep up their fitness levels and continue running long distances, your knees have been placed under constant pressure for over 26 miles on hard ground, and they absorb a huge amount of force. They need time to rest, recover and heal, so make sure you enjoy a break from running in the aftermath."

If you had knee problems after your marathon but you've rested sufficiently, addressed

// A common cause of runner's knee is simply muscle weakness. It can take runners out of action for six weeks //

Chatterjee explains: "A common cause of runner's knee is simply muscle weakness. It's a problem that can take runners out of action for six weeks or longer."

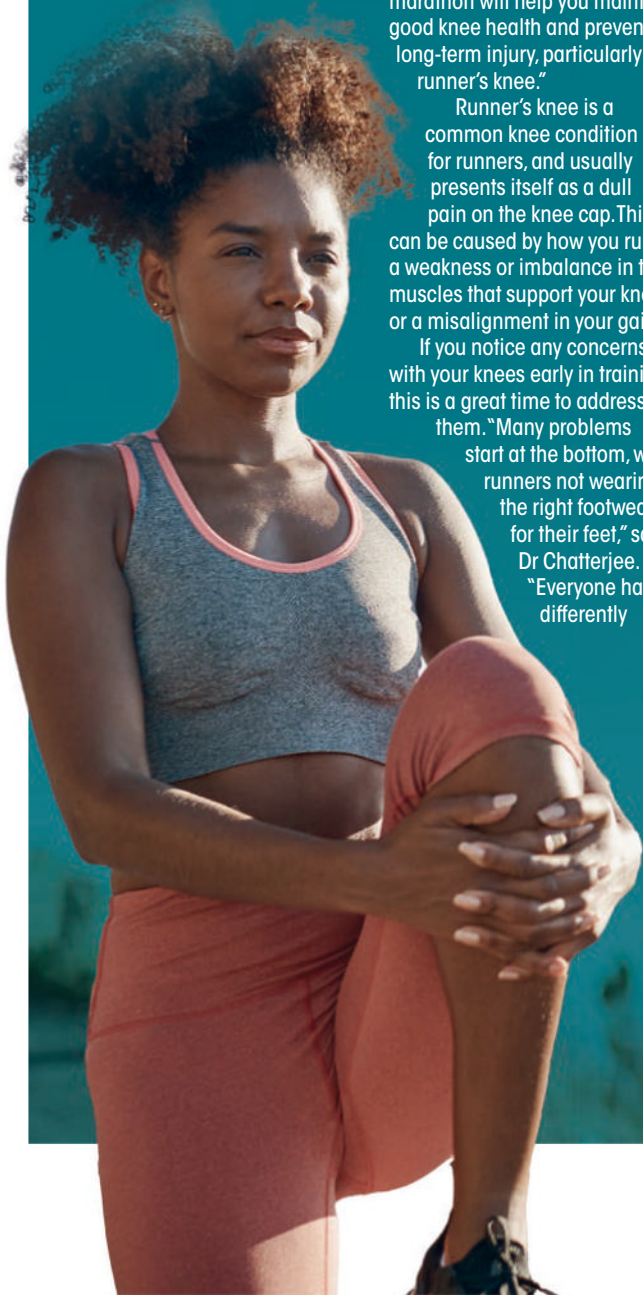
Incorporating strength training into your schedule, including a variety of weighted squats and lunges, is a great way to strengthen the knee muscles (as well as the upper body, abdominals, and legs) and help prevent injury in the future.

If you feel like you are particularly prone to knee problems and pain while running, it may be worth a visit to a running specialist to get to the source of the problem. "A misaligned gait is a common cause of problems, and can often be due to tight hamstrings, a stride that is too long (a short cadence), or a hip drop," says Dr Chatterjee. "Visiting a running clinic or professional is a great way to quickly ascertain the

any concerns you had with your knees with either a trainer specialist or at a running clinic and increased your strength training, then the time has come to give running a go again.

"It's important not to push yourself too hard or too fast," says Chatterjee. Try brisk walks and light jogging in the weeks after running a marathon, as these are a great way to get moving again. "Once you feel sure on your feet, have no aches or pains and feel ready, you can get back running long distances again," says Dr Chatterjee.

"If you are still experiencing knee pain while running, it's important to keep resting. Applying ice to the affected area and keeping it elevated will help with the swelling. Taking NSAIDs such as ibuprofen can also help with inflammation. If the problems continue, you should speak to your doctor." 📌





HEALTH



The latest nutrition, beauty and health headlines. Because running doesn't end at your feet

A RIGHT PICKLE

There are many different types of cramps, from menstrual cramps to pregnancy-related cramps; but exercise-associated muscle cramps, or EAMCs, can put an end your hopes of a PB. They sneak up on you, hit you with excruciating pain and often force you to stop running to stretch the affected muscle.

Traditionally, cramps have been associated with dehydration. Research published in the *Journal of Athletic Training*, based on the work of Dr Kevin Miller, a professor at Texas State University and Dr Martin Schwellnus, an exercise scientist from South Africa, has revealed that dehydration alone may not be responsible for this often-unbearable condition. Athletes given pickle juice (vinegar) had reduced cramp duration by 40% then those given water or nothing.

As the response was so immediate – it took about 90 seconds for the cramp to resolve in the pickle juice group – and so much faster than the typical 25 minutes it takes for pickle juice to work its way through your circulatory system, the team hypothesised that something was happening outside the stomach to affect the cramp. The researchers proposed that a reflex in the mouth created by the pickle brine, led to a shock to the system that distracted the central nervous system enough for the cramp to reset.

If you suffer from cramp, the researchers recommend you start a cramp journal, writing



when, for how long and how severe each cramp is to establish a pattern. This may help you alter your behaviour or experiment with different remedies until you find one that works for you.

Check with your doctor before you try this solution, particularly if you have high blood pressure, as pickle brine has a high salt content. It's also important to rule out any undiagnosed medical conditions that could be causing the cramping, such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, hypothyroidism, or Machado-Joseph's disease.

▶ The healing power of Hempe

A trio of natural and sustainable balms from the Hempe CBD range promise to soothe all your niggles and injuries. CBD ICE and CBD HOT use a mix of hot and cold treatment to boost muscle recovery and relieve achy joints after intense sessions. And the CBD SOS Skin Balm soothes any skin emergencies on the go, from itching to acne to eczema. A great skin savour to shove in your kit bag or handbag. **From £15.99**, hir.global/collections/hempe



▶ Easy peasy bespoke vitamins

Take the Vitil Health quiz online and you're one step away from your own personalised vitamin pack based on your health needs. You'll get a bespoke combination of four supplements, packed in daily vitamin strips and delivered every 28 days in letterbox-friendly packaging, to ensure you never run out. A simple and smart way to take back control of your health. vitil.com

3 OF THE BEST SKIN PROTECTORS



BEST FOR WATER BABIES

BATHLETIC AFTER SPORTS BATH OIL

£16.99, teambathletic.com
Its natural plant oils ease your tired muscles post run, with a nice blend of lavender, eucalyptus and black pepper to help you relax too.



BEST FOR SLEEPY HEADS

NORDIC ROOTS TRUFFLE NIGHT CREAM

£32, greenpeople.co.uk
Harvested from Finnish forests, this luxurious cream glides on and soaks in smoothly, with northern truffle, glycerine and hemp seed oil to reset your skin hydration while you sleep.



BEST FOR BEAUTY BOOSTS

ISHGA BALANCING MARINE CREAM

£39, ishga.com
Antioxidants, omega fatty acids and vitamin E provide nourishment to the skin, with the sensual scent of sandalwood and patchouli oils to soothe your senses too.

MYTH BUSTER

X HILLS ARE HARD WORK

Even if you know hills are helpful in improving your running fitness, and performance, the thought of punishing your body while you build up elevation is not for everyone. But hills don't have to be horrible. Starting slow at the bottom of a hill, and keeping a steady pace, will often get you to the top before those runners who start off too fast. And using intermittent power hiking, or fast walking, alongside slow running, can save energy and still give training benefits. Focus on good technique rather than speed; short steps, high shoulders and drive your elbows back to keep the turnover of your feet (your cadence) high.



Raji's running journey started late but accelerated quickly

WHY I RUN

Raji Sundar

Raji started running in her 40s after being non-sporty in school. Running has now become her friend, teacher and healer; and even though it's sometimes a nuisance, she's devoted to it

plan I made and it paid off. I was thrilled with the experience, and the race went better than I expected.

I completed it in just over five hours with plenty of energy left.

What do you remember about your first race?

It was in my mid-40s. I signed up for a 10K charity race in 2015 as my friend had signed up and needed a

companion. At that stage, I had not even done a 5K race. I did not know about C25K, training plans, parkruns – nothing! – as nobody in my friends or family circle was a runner. We prepared for the race using rookie methods, with no expectation except to run non-stop. I never looked back after that; it was the defining moment for me. The race, the atmosphere, the cheering crowd and the runners... I was hooked from then on.

What do you remember about your first race?

I can recall it with extreme clarity, a feeling of not fitting in, being astounded by the mass of people, waiting in line for the portaloos, the competitors in vast numbers, the cheering crowd, completing the race. My jaw stayed agape until the end.

Which race are you most proud of?

After three years of running, I finally took on the challenge of completing my first marathon in Manchester in 2018. I kept it a secret from almost everyone except my family, as I thought people would make fun of me. Despite this, I stuck to the training

Where is

your favourite place to run?

I feel incredibly lucky to live in an area with such amazing nature; the TransPennine trails and Manchester canal are my go-to run spots.

How do you fit in training?

I'm always excited when preparing for a race because I can plan ahead. For days that aren't race days, I make sure to include long runs on the weekends, mid-length runs on Thursdays and a few short runs whenever I can, including club runs.

What has running taught you?

Running is my teacher! It has helped me to get past many self-defeating thoughts and has made me believe in myself. It has shown me that I can set limits and aim as high as I want. Additionally, it has connected me with some of the most wonderful people on the planet.

Once you're a runner, your background, culture, social status, colour and looks don't matter. I'm an England Athletics run coach and have established a social enterprise called Midlife Runners Paradise, coaching over-40s men and women to make running an integral part of their lifestyle for enhanced physical and mental health and for wellbeing. 🏃‍♀️

ABOUT RAJI

Despite being brought up in a culture where sports were for watching, not experiencing, Raji is now a qualified England Athletics running coach. At school, she felt her height dismissed her from excelling in any sports, being only 5'1". Yet, she ran her first marathon in 2018, and in 2019, she conquered one of the highest peaks in the Himalayas. Raji is also a qualified holistic health and weight loss coach with a diploma in fitness and nutrition. Her passion is to help people in their midlife to find joy, health, happiness and confidence through running. She is the founder of Midlife Runners Paradise (midliferunnersparadise.com)





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EAT WELL

HOW CAN I ENSURE I DON'T DEHYDRATE WHEN I'M TRAINING OUTDOORS?



Keeping a steady pace is almost impossible when dehydration sets in. Your body's natural temperature is around 37°C but running in the heat will increase its core temperature. Staying hydrated will make sure you don't veer into the danger zone so try to sip on water throughout the day and pay attention to thirst cues.

Electrolytes are key during the summer months as they rehydrate important minerals like sodium and potassium that are automatically lost through sweat. You can opt for a concentrated carbohydrate electrolyte sports drink or one with fewer carbs depending on your needs.

Try to eat as many water-rich fruit and veg as you can, especially on training days. Good options include watermelon, cucumber, celery, along with juicy peaches and nectarines. Herbal teas and coconut water also count towards your daily water quota (at least eight large glasses but more if you're active) and try to keep a reusable water bottle topped up and by your side throughout the day.



MEAL MATHS

This summery snack offers the perfect mix of macros to fuel fitness performance



Greek yoghurt



Purée peach



Chopped pistachio



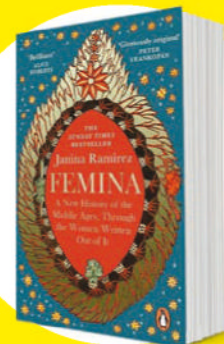
Cinnamon



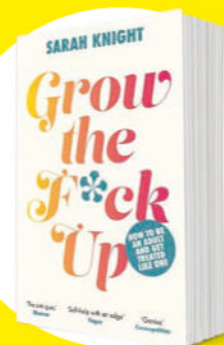
Peachy kebab



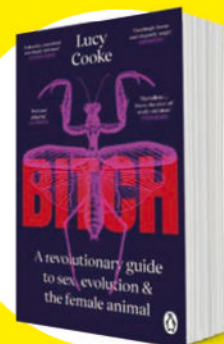
This month's
wise women



FEMINA: A NEW HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES, THROUGH THE WOMEN WRITTEN OUT OF IT
JANINA RAMIREZ
£10.99, WH Allen
A fascinating retelling of medieval history that reveals how women were largely omitted.



GROW THE F*CK UP: HOW TO BE AN ADULT AND GET TREATED LIKE ONE
SARAH KNIGHT
£16.99, Quercus
Packed with practical advice tips for life, from balancing your budget to communicating better.



BITCH: A REVOLUTIONARY GUIDE TO SEX, EVOLUTION & THE FEMALE ANIMAL
LUCY COOKE
£10.99, Penguin
A book attempting to overturn outdated expectations of bodies, brains, biology and behaviour.

LIFE COACH

Laura Fountain is a running coach, a personal trainer, a marathon runner and the author of *The Lazy Runner* and *Tricurious*. She is running a new Marathon Squad for spring: lazygirlrunning.com/marathon-squad
Follow Laura @lazygirlrunning



From small focus to bigger picture

“Focus on the mile you’re in” I always tell runners who are training for a marathon. I think it’s really sound advice for not getting overwhelmed by the total distance of the race.

We all know there is much to be gained from being present – being fully focussed and engaged with the here and now. Mindful running is a glorious sounding concept that asks runners to switch off from distractions and reconnect with the motion of running,

|| It’s my job to keep a tally as runners have short memories ||

using all of their senses to fully appreciate what they’re doing at that moment.

This is all very well – but what if you’re not enjoying your run? What if your body feels a bit aching, sore and heavy and the route is boring and uninspiring? What if you’re on a treadmill and using all of your senses would make you even more aware of how close you are to other sweaty humans and how terrible the music they’re playing is?

Sometimes it’s good to zoom in and focus on the step in front of you, but at other times we need to see the big picture. And there’s no

more important time for that than when running feels terrible.

It’s my job as a coach to keep a tally, because runners sometimes have very short memories. If the run they did went terribly, felt harder and was much slower than they wanted it to be, then that must mean that they’re a terrible runner, they’ve lost all their fitness and they’ll never reach their race goal.

It’s my job to remind them of the long run they did last week or the recent 5K when they smashed their PB. It’s my job to reassure them that not only do both of those things

prove that they’re not all that terrible at running but that those are the exact things that are probably making today’s run feel tough. Of course, you don’t need a coach to remind you of this; you can use a diary or a training log and engage with some honest reflection.

A marathon is made up of 26.2 miles. By asking my runners to break it down and focus on just one at a time, we’re separating them, because how you feel in one mile can be very different to how you’ll feel in another. You might feel worse, but you can also feel much better. 🏃

Running is mindful and painful in equal measure so adapt your approach to fit





INJURY CLINIC

Shin splints

Emma Kirk-Odunubi is on hand to help you identify the cause of that nasty stabbing shin pain, and find ways for you to prevent it happening again. In the meantime, you need to rest!



Emma is a sports scientist & strength coach who has been in the running industry for over 15 years. Along with her partner, she set up Bulletproof Athletic (bulletproofathletic.com) to empower runners to achieve their goals

THE INJURY

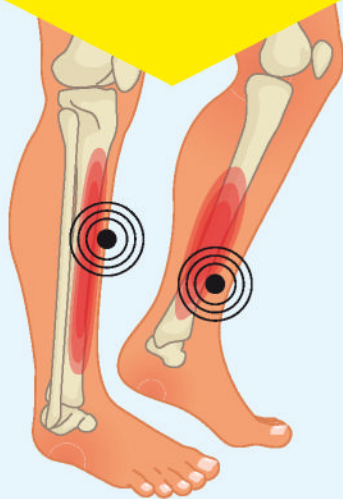
Shin splints (medial tibial stress syndrome – or MTSS)

Area affected: Shin and calf

Time off running: 1-6 weeks

Recovery period:

Up to 8 weeks



What is it?

While shin splints – or MTSS – is a specific injury, the term ‘shin splints’ can be commonly used to identify pain on the shin bone, otherwise known as the tibia. It is one of the most common injuries experienced by runners, and is especially prevalent in newbies. It’s important to know what it is, so that you’re able to identify it before it becomes a more serious injury.

The shin can be a nasty source of discomfort, whatever the injury. Sometimes shin splints presents as an uncomfortable sharp stabbing pain during the run, while other times it can present as a constant dull ache afterwards. Before leaping to conclusions, however, let’s rule out a couple of other potential injuries.

MTSS or stress fracture?

MTSS (Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome) is exercise-induced pain along the lower end of the medial tibia (inner

shin bone). You will be able to feel the pain if you press along the inner shin over a 3-5cm area.

Some shin pain like this can, on further investigation, be diagnosed as a stress fracture or bone bruising. To make sure you treat the correct injury, it’s important to see a physio to identify your specific issue.

If you’ve ruled out bruising or fractures, there’s a good chance that the discomfort you’re experiencing is shin splints. If this is you right now – then rest! Take some time off your feet (sorry!) and read on. Let’s look at how to avoid developing shin splints in the first place.

Slow that pronation down

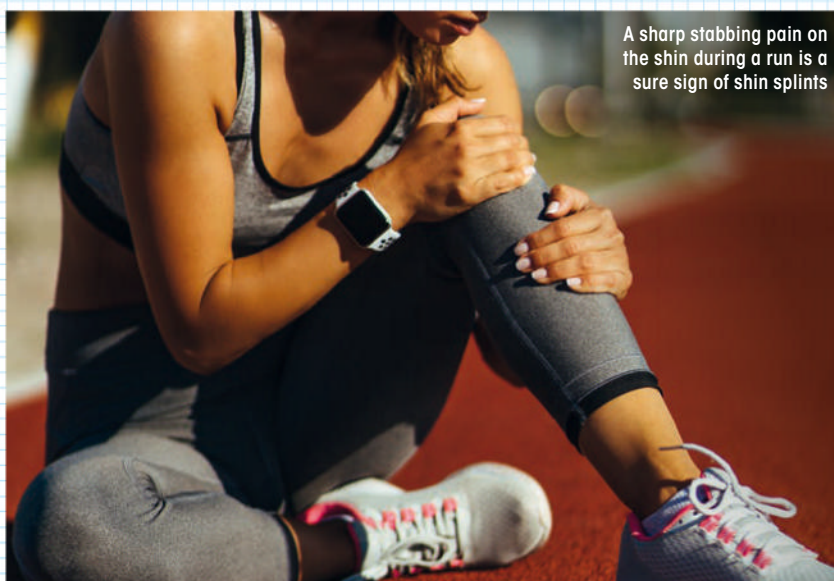
When your foot makes contact with the ground (whichever part of the foot strikes first), the foot moves through a ‘pronatory’ movement. This movement is not inherently bad: our feet need to move this way to make contact with the ground and transition into propelling off again.

However, the less pronation the better, when it comes to running form. This is because the faster the pronation, the more stress on the tissues, ligaments and tendons further up the chain. This stress increases the tension on the muscles and can directly lead to shin pain.

You can reduce the speed of pronation by implementing simple foot strengthening exercises and you can also use insoles.

Correct footwear

When was the last time you replaced your running shoes? Shoes last 400-500 miles before the cushioning



A sharp stabbing pain on the shin during a run is a sure sign of shin splints

begins to break down and isn't able to support the foot with shock absorption. And that lack of absorption means increased impact on the shin bone.

So yes, go and treat yourself to a new pair and ensure you get a gait analysis when doing so, because being in the right running shoes is vital to avoiding shin issues. If the footwear you are in is incorrect, it can cause your running biomechanics to be affected and increase your chance of injury. No second guessing here! Ask an expert to look at how you run.

Muscle balance

The first thing you need to understand here is that muscles work in pairs. If there is an imbalance in the strength or function of one of the muscles, then issues can occur.

The tibialis anterior sits along the front of the tibia and its key role in running is to slow down the plantar-flexion of the foot on initial contact. If the muscle on the back of a calf is too tight, this will force the muscle on the front (the tibialis anterior) to work harder. In simple terms, making sure that both legs are equally strong will help keep shin pain at bay.

Build steadily

A great way to prevent shin pain is to avoid increasing your training load too



Be mindful of your stride length; too long and you're risking shin pain

// If your footwear is incorrect, it can cause your running biomechanics to be affected and increase your chance of injury //

quickly; this applies both to the amount of training and the intensity of it.

For example, you might not have increased the number of runs you do a week, but you might have switched an easy run for a speed session. This change in load will alter your body's ability to recover, so be sure you only make small adjustments to your plan.

Check your stride

When you run, you need to make sure your leading leg doesn't stride too far out in front of your body. The further in front that your leg strikes the ground, the more ground reaction force is absorbed by the body.

This happens at a body position where the leg is almost straight during that over-stride and 90% of the time during heel strike (this is why heel striking gets a bad rep).

Forces are at their highest here and most likely to damage us. Try to keep your feet landing close to the centre of the body to reduce this force but also to aid in generating the step forward in your stride.

Strong footies

Your big toe joint is the strongest lever in the foot when used effectively. It is very common for big toe joints to be either hyper-mobile or immobile, both of which can cause muscle imbalances and weaknesses. Working on the mobility and strength of your toes and feet is crucial in reducing shin pain. Use exercises such as towel grabs to strengthen the toes, and make sure that you mobilise and roll out your feet and toes regularly. 🧘

BUILD UP YOUR DEFENCES

Two great exercises to do to prevent shin splints



#1 Tibialis anterior raises

Stand with your back against a wall, walk your feet out about half a metre from the wall. Keeping your legs straight, raise your toes off the ground while keeping your heels down on the ground. This engages the shin muscle and will help increase lower leg strength. Perform three sets of 10-12 reps to start with, and then increase to 20 reps per set.

#2 Eccentric calf raises

Place a tennis/lacrosse ball between your heels. Move into a calf raise and keep the ball between your heels. Lower back down to the floor for a slow count of five. Repeat this 15-20 times over two or three sets. This will encourage you to use your big toe joint while giving calves some much needed strength. Increase the range by doing it on a step and dropping the heel further.



MY BEST RACE

Swift Half, Bideford, North Devon

For Tash Acres, founder of Earth Runs (earthruns.com), her local half marathon will always be her favourite race

I remember my first and best race; my local half marathon in Bideford, North Devon. I'd only been running for about three months and had just completed the C25K when I thought signing up for a half would be a good idea.

Thankfully, Bideford is known as the Swift Half, due to it being pretty flat. It heads towards Great Torrington and then back to Bideford along the beautiful Tarka Trail. Part of the race goes through a long railway tunnel, which is a thrill as the runners whoop like kids.

I remember my waning spirits being lifted by the crowd's support and the joyful samba band. For the final half mile, I ran (hobbled!) along the beautiful Bideford Quay and the best part was running to my mum. She'd been my biggest supporter from the start, believing I could do it even when I didn't. It was perfect.

These days I love the freedom of just running. I run as often as I can and plant a tree each day that I do, through my company Earth Runs. It gives me motivation and a sense of achievement.



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Looking for a spectacular, breath-taking trail running experience? The Wicklow Ecotrail offers 19K, 30K, 46K and 80K race options, making it truly inclusive, regardless of your trail experience. You'll be running besides the Irish sea, racing in the heart of ancient Ireland. All distances start on the promenade at Bray, the biggest town in County Wicklow, then take a wild and beautiful route through mountains, waterfalls and along the Wicklow Way. You'll pass by the Powerscourt Waterfall and Lough Tay viewpoint before you loop round the Roundwood Reservoir on your return to Bray. This race takes pride in its eco-responsible heritage. **30 September 2023, wicklow.ecotrail.com/en**

13 VALLEYS ULTRA: A BRAND-NEW RUNNING EXPERIENCE FOR THE UK

This new ultra event links all 13 valleys of the Lake District National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, together for the first time, and at 180K it will rank alongside some of the toughest tests of ultra running in the world. We love that 5% of each entry fee will be donated to the Lake District Foundation. Taking place across three days, this race has been developed as a sustainable event that pays homage to the communities, businesses and landscape that make the Lake District so special. Take on the 20K, 60K, 100K or 180K options, all finishing in Keswick, and all offering spectacular trail and mountain running over the fells and round magnificent lakes. **29 September 2023, 13valleysultra.com**



© STEVE ASHWORTH / 13 VALLEYS ULTRA



Is high impact interval training (HIIT) the best method of training for long distance running?

Can shorter, harder interval work be more helpful in preparing for long distance races, than time on feet?



Tammy Sapir, Trainer at F45 Mill Hill (f45training.co.uk/millhill)



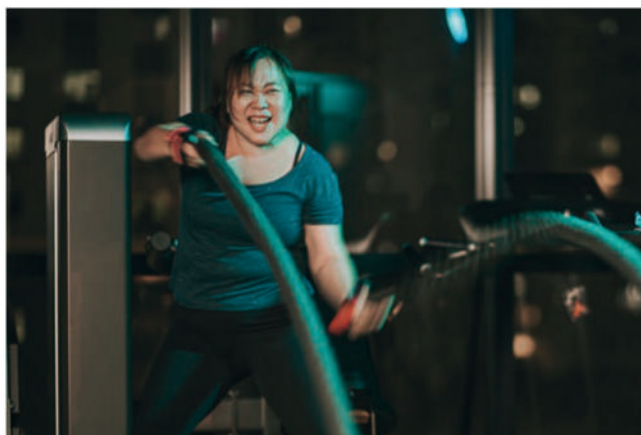
We've all heard about HIIT, the highly efficient exercise that uses interval structures to alternate between intense periods of explosive moves and short rest times. Without a doubt, the greatest benefit of HIIT is increased stamina, which is vital for long distance running. The interval split between work and rest helps increase your cardiovascular system and lung capacity so adding in one or two HIIT training sessions a week alongside your long-distance runs can help to significantly improve speed and cardiovascular output.

Improving your cardiovascular output strengthens your heart and enables you to carry more oxygen in your blood, meaning you fatigue less easily and can continue running with

// During short explosive periods, you are improving muscle strength, power and explosivity which all increase leg power //

strength. During these short explosive work periods, you are improving muscle strength, power and explosivity which all help to increase your leg power and build up fast twitch muscle fibres, allowing you to run faster for longer with greater strength in a shorter and condensed time.

HIIT also encourages good overall balance in your body through training all muscle groups and increasing the efficiency and power in your core. You need more than just stamina when it comes to long distance running so working on performance to significantly improve your deep core muscles will have a very important role in keeping your body stable while you run.



Emma Bord (emmabordpt.com), personal trainer with a Leadership in Running Fitness qualification



HIIT training improves stamina and speed and, combined with strength training, is a crucial part of a long-distance training plan. However, I'd argue that to be successful in long distance

running, preparing the body for time-on-feet is essential.

In scientific terms, long runs increase aerobic endurance, forcing the body to become more efficient by teaching the heart to pump more blood and therefore more oxygen around the body. Through longer activities, mitochondria, which act as the energy factories of our cells, increase in number and size. These produce and store more energy, which in turn help to get a steady supply of oxygen and energy to the body and enable you to run for longer.

// Long runs increase aerobic endurance by teaching the heart to pump more blood and more oxygen around the body //

Another major benefit of the long run is that it teaches the body to use fat as fuel over carbs, which will delay the depletion of glycogen thus delaying the chances of 'hitting the wall'. Aside from strengthening your heart and enabling it to work more efficiently, long runs also strengthen your muscles, tendons and bones, reducing your risk of injury.

Undoubtedly, running long distances is also a mental game. The long training run acts like a psychological confidence booster, encouraging mental strength and the belief that your body can tackle the distance. It also enables you to try out your fuelling, pacing, clothing and footwear so that you are best prepared when it comes to that specific goal. 🧠



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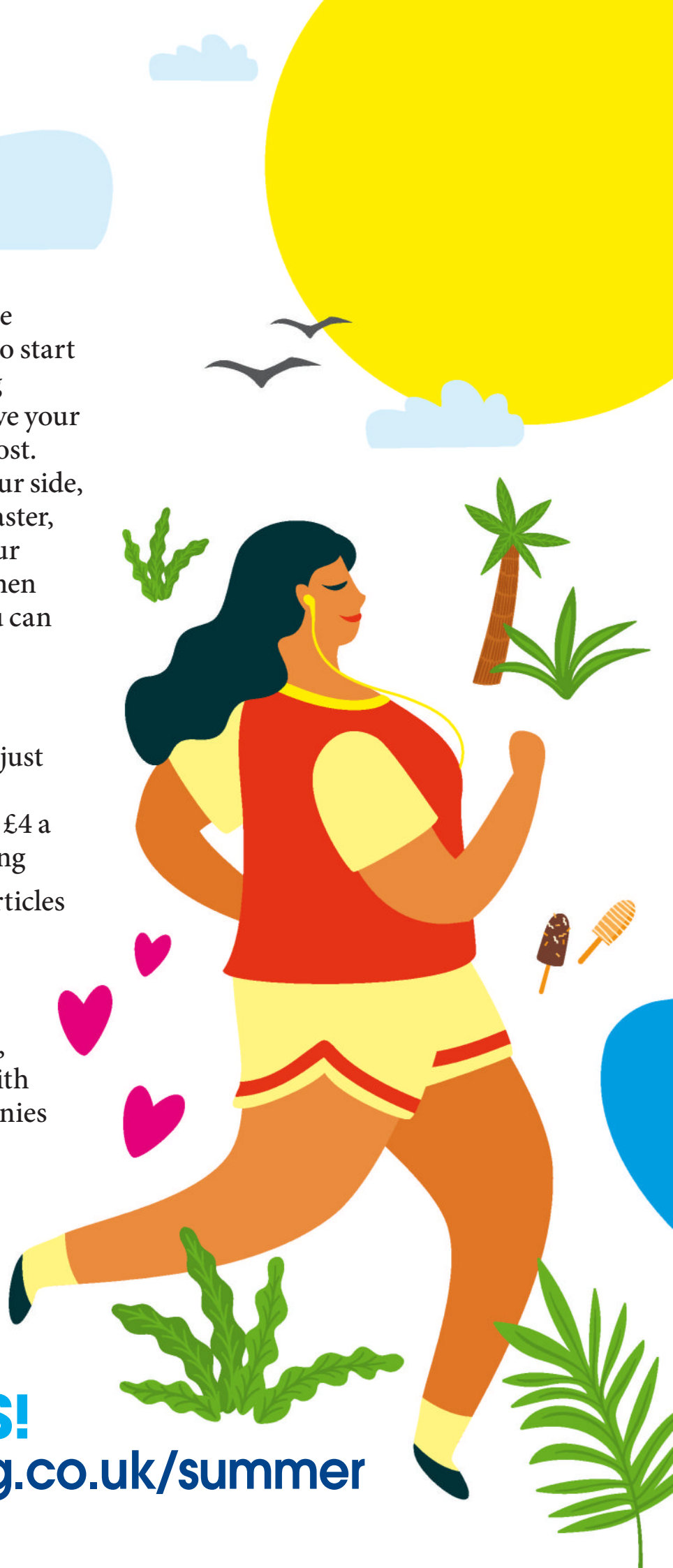
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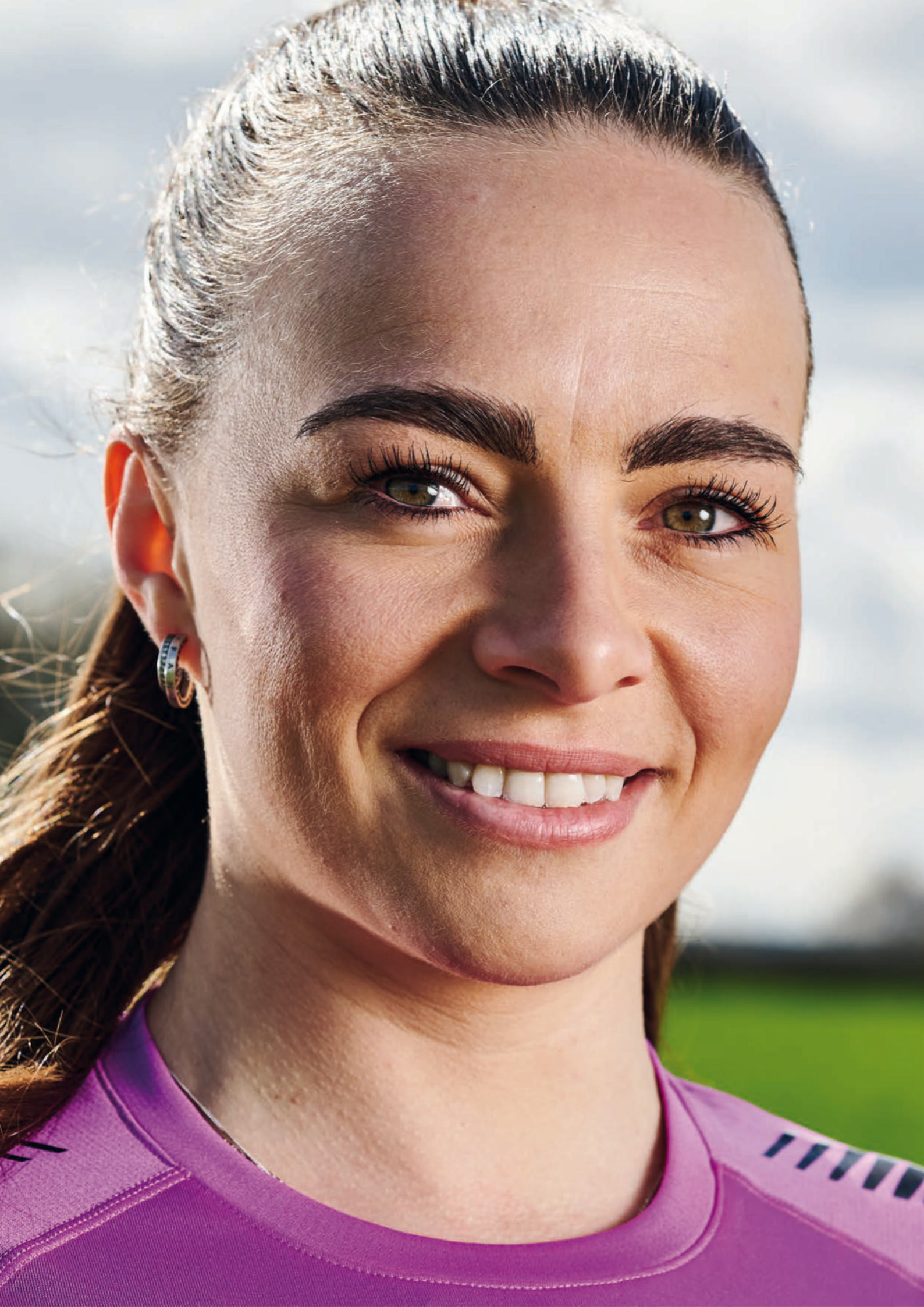
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Nat Long

“WAY BACK WHEN I WAS YOUNG I DON’T THINK I KNEW HOW BIG RUNNING WOULD GET IN MY LIFE, BUT I DEFINITELY HAD A LOVE FOR IT STRAIGHT AWAY”

Nat Long is an ultra runner and successful Instagrammer, as well as having a demanding job in cancer research. We caught up with her a day or so before she took on the Thames Path 100, an ultra that goes from Richmond to Oxford, and possibly her biggest challenge yet

Words: Rachel Ifans

If you’re on Insta and you’ve got your running algorithms sorted, you probably know Nat Long. She posts hugely entertaining and popular Run Until videos and she’s got 264,000 followers, which is one of the biggest audiences – if not *the* biggest – for any sole running account in the UK.

Nat, a Senior Neurosurgical Research Coordinator, has been posting about running for a few years but it was only when she was approached by Sports Direct in 2022 and asked to make a Run Until video that she found her niche. She explains: “I was still fairly small then compared to now and I didn’t really know what they were asking me to do. Basically, they said they wanted me to go out on a run and find something and film myself doing it!”

Despite her initial confusion, Nat really loved the brief because it wasn’t very product focused; it was just about her enjoyment of running. “So that’s when my whole Run Until thing started,”

she continues. “I just went until I found a statue, videoed it, posted it and it blew up from there really.”

Dogs in coats

Nat’s followers started suggesting things she could find during her runs so she carried on doing it. She says: “I try and do at least four or five videos a week. I’ll do a bit of my normal run as a warm-up and then I’ll look through the comments, choose one of the requests and then weave my filming into the run.

“The comments I get through are so random but I do enjoy it and some of the weirder requests have gone really massive over the last six months,” she laughs. “I had to run until I saw an octopus one day and although I was actually at the beach, in the end I found it on a poster. And another fun one was a dog in a coat. I ran past so many dogs, and it was raining that day, but none of them had coats on!”

Young runner

Nat comes from a close-knit family, one where both parents

are keen runners. It was her dad who suggested she join an athletics club when she was young and it suited her down to the ground. “I wasn’t that social when I was a kid,” she explains. “We were just quite family orientated when I was growing up and I loved running. It was only as I got older that I realised there were so many more benefits to it than just the medals.

“From a young age, I liked the feeling of pushing myself and the enjoyment of being out. I have quite an active mind but when I’m running I don’t get too distracted and I order my thoughts better. I think that was my main draw to it.”

Nat has a demanding job and she feels running has helped with her ability to get over difficult things. She says: “I’m quite mentally strong and I think that’s one of the benefits of running. If you can really push yourself when running, I think it helps you get through the harder stuff in life.”

“Way back when I was young I don’t think I knew how big running would get in my life, but I definitely had a love for it straight away,” she smiles.

Upping the distance

After a short hiatus when she concentrated on football and swimming, Nat rejoined her old club,

“From a young age, I really liked the feeling of pushing myself and the enjoyment of being out. I have quite an active mind but when I’m running I don’t get too distracted and I order my thoughts better. I think that was my main draw to it.”

Nat has launched a project on her Insta where followers can ask her running related questions. It’s called #100RQ

an open banana. I shuffled towards him probably making a bit of a grunty sound and I don’t even know if I said thank you! I stuffed it in my face and then I perked up a bit after that.”

Despite the traumas at Brighton, Nat still posted a great time of 3:42:00 and the experience made her want to run further. So a friend called Olwen at her running club introduced her to Saxons, Vikings and Normans (SVN), a trail ultra company down in Kent which specialises in Laps Ultras.

Laps Ultras are normally five or six-mile loops. You can choose how many loops you want to do and there’s a set time to do it in – normally around six or eight hours. Nat explains: “I went along in late 2019 and did a 50-miler and a 100-miler first, and that really kicked off my love for ultras.”

To be honest, we’ve rarely met anyone who loves all types of running as much as Nat does. We talk to sprinters who say they can’t do long distance, and we have marathon runners who say they’ve no fast twitch muscles at all. But for Nat, it’s all running and she loves it all.

She reflects: “I think races on trails are my real love, but I’d probably do any distance. With my running club, I do track stuff in the summer which I really enjoy. I train the parents of the





NAT'S ESSENTIAL KIT

Must-haves when Nat is out on the trails

#1 Janji Women's Groundwork Knit

Janji is geared to trails and these shorts are the perfect fit for me, they're quite thin and they never ride up. They've got two big massive pockets at the front and then they've got a little one at the back if you want to hook anything.

#2 Salomon Active Skin 8 hydration vest

You can tighten this easily at the front and it comes with two 500ml soft flasks. I bought straws separately that I like to attach to the soft flasks to make them easier to drink from when running along.

#3 Flipbelt Zipper

It's comfortable and doesn't ride up. I'll probably wear one of these for this big ultra because you have to carry more stuff – like two head torches – so wearing this will disperse the weight a bit.

#4 2XU Vectr Light Cushion full-length compression socks

These are the tightest socks I've ever had and they stay tight. I've had my pair for three or four years now and they're still tight. They're knee length and squish my calf – I do all my long runs and races in these and I think the compression has been good for any small niggles.

#5 Janji Rainrunner Pack jacket

Absolutely love this jacket. It has all these little things that I didn't know I needed that work so well. It's got an elasticated

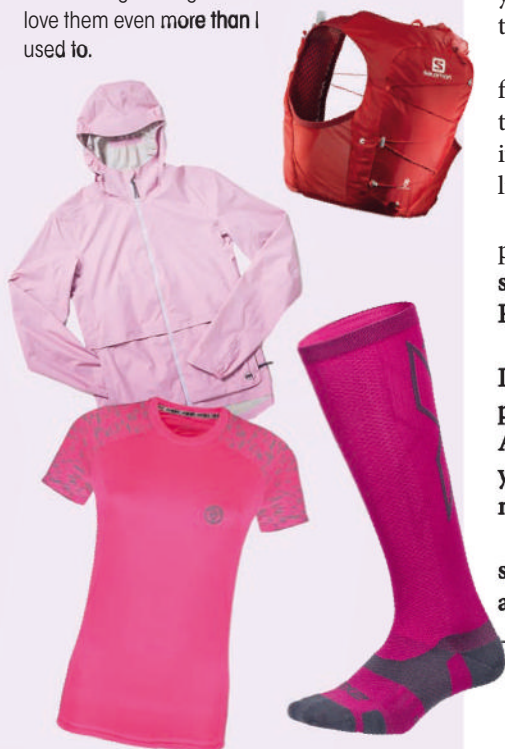
hood which stays up and keeps me warm while still being breathable, and it packs down into a tiny little square. Mine is in Bloom colour – everyone asks me where I got it!

#6 Proviz Reflect 360

I love this short-sleeve bright pink top. I wear it for most of my ultras and my running videos, so much so that it seems to be part of my vibe now. I think people recognise me because it's so bright.

#7 New Balance Hierro X version 7

They're barely 8mm drop from the toe to the heel and they don't have a high stack which really suits me. I think I have fairly wide feet for the size of my feet so NB are just a little bit wider than the Nikes I used to wear. They've made the new Hierros 20 grams lighter, so I love them even more than I used to.



So much can go wrong during a 100-mile race but that just makes getting to the end sweeter

younger athletes there and I try to compete with them too to support them.

"I've done 400m before but that's a bit too sprinty for me so last year I did 800m. I also like 1500m and the 5K which is probably more suited to me because it's a bit speedy but still quite long for a track. I also like the relay because it's a teamy one."

For now, though, ultras are king. Nat recently took part in the Thames Path 100 by Centurion, a race she was prepping for when we spoke, which starts in Richmond and ends up in Oxford.

She says: "I'll run by myself for the first 50 miles. I'll definitely recognise some of the runners, so I'll probably share a few miles with them and have a chat. And then at 50 miles, because that's the first time you're allowed a pacer, which should be about 9pm, my lovely fiancé Olly will join me for nine miles or so."

"Olly doesn't really run much but he's so supportive. I sign him up every now and again, and then he ends up doing quite a lot of miles





“I started running at 9:30am on a Saturday and went until I saw the sunrise Sunday morning which took 59 miles/94K”

because I like it when he stays with me! Finally, Olwen will join me from 66 miles all the way to the end and I'm so grateful that she's happy to plod next to me."

Out of fuel

Even with Olly and Olwen's support, running through the night by yourself is gruelling both physically and mentally. Nat is a natural optimist, resilient and full of passion but she's had tough times when racing.

She remembers a 100-mile nighttime backyard ultra in 2022 when she realised halfway round that she hadn't brought her Huel fuel with her. "I'd left the lot of it in my fridge. There were brilliant aid stations on the route, but I didn't eat anything because in my head, I didn't have my Huel and I didn't want anything else.

"That was so stupid, because I'm so hot on nutrition normally, but it made sure I never forget anything like that ever again."

The slip-up with the food meant that Nat slowed quite a lot by 75 miles and didn't have enough time to make it to 100. "It felt really brutal and it's still my most disappointing race," she says. "You're just so tired on those big long ones; your brain doesn't work properly and negative things can eat away at you. Once my body didn't have enough fuel, everything just started shutting down and the shuffle turned into a walk and that was it."

When times are tough doing the long miles, Nat remembers the "Why?" behind what she's doing. "Just as the negative things can eat away at you, the positive things can really snowball into feeling much better. I just try to picture myself finishing the race and feeling good," she says, admitting that the motivation and support she gets from her social media followers also spurs her on when she's in a slump.

Chasing pavements

Training for ultras is more about time on your feet than being very specific with the miles, Nat reckons. And because she sets herself some big goals over a year but also peppers in a lot of smaller goals as part of

Nat trains a lot during the night, making sure her fiancé knows where and when she's running



Nat's videos are extremely popular with runners and give her running a purpose

her training plan, it can become quite complicated. She explains: "I have a 20-week plan at the moment. Months ago, I started having a look at what miles I wanted to hit each week. I had a building phase and then a month of peak weeks where I made sure that I got back-to-back long runs in on the weekend. Sometimes, these back-to-back long runs would be races, like the Paris Half and the London Marathon, but I'd try and make sure in my head that I didn't go all out at these races. I had to keep in mind that they were just long runs in the bigger training plan.

Sun's up, run's up

Nat loves an adventure and an expedition and that's evident both from her love of ultras and her Run Until videos. Over the last year or so, she's been tasked with finding a capybara, a man with a moustache, Jupiter, a proposal, a pink elephant, The Grinch, an igloo and someone walking their cat!

'Run until you see a sunrise' was the longest one Nat has done. "I started running at 9:30am on a Saturday and went until I saw the sunrise Sunday morning which took 59 miles/94K," she laughs. While that sounds extreme, Run Until is something we can all have a go at when run-
spiration is thin on the ground! 🏃‍♀️



Running mates

Because we run better together

This month, you share your success with the walk/run method, tell us why you rate the food bank run and explain how running clears your head and you love it!

WANT TO JOIN US? SIMPLE.

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THE BIG QUESTIONS

The running topics we've been talking about this month

Can you achieve a good race time if you walk some of it?



An ultrarunner was discovered cheating by accepting a lift in a car: what do you think?



@Rachel Baker

I've just had to stop running because of a knee issue so I've started speed/race walking instead.

Just done a 5K speed walk five minutes faster than my last running 5K!



@Emily Coltman

My PB for a half is 2:19 while running, and 2:16 using the walk-run method. It works!



@Jennifer Caplan Givens

I achieved a PB in my half with walk-running, beating my best half marathon time by nearly 10 minutes and I ran that one straight!



@Christine Natalie

I walk some of every race due to my heart condition/pacemaker. Often, I can still place among the overall women runners of my ability who haven't had to stop and walk.



@Emma Harlin

This so reminds me of school cross-country around 1989: bleak, misty mornings in our gym knickers, cutting corners on the far side of the football pitch in the fog when teachers couldn't see. Back in a decent time, we were 'awarded' with selection for the school cross-country team and the teachers told us we were talented. Needless to say, we didn't bring any medals home. We were cheeky teens and would have hopped in a car too given the chance!



@Denette Lynch

When she took the podium spot, accepted the prize and had photos taken... that was taking it way too far. She should have stopped it then, if not as soon as she finished, when she should have notified someone that she did not qualify.



@Amanda Marie

Apparently, she said she got lost, was going to quit but a friend found her and gave her a ride to the next checkpoint. She told them she took a car and was giving up but was told 'you will regret giving up now' so she carried on. That is all well and good but the post-race photos of her smiling with her prize, and not mentioning this to organisers, makes me think her story doesn't add up entirely.



Tell us your running stories and achievements. Email us at: womensrunning@anthem.co.uk

Food bank run

Michelle Pipet, 41, a nurse from Southampton, praises a new scheme which encourages runners to drop off food bank donations when they head out

"I learned about a new campaign called Food Bank Run from your podcast. It's where runners drop off some food at a food bank while they are on one of their runs.

After hearing what a good scheme it is, I planned to get involved myself. As it was, I ended up walking due to injury but that meant I could carry more items with me.

"I received such a lovely welcome from the volunteers and it has opened up a whole new sense of community. I've been to a few of their coffee mornings and actually volunteered for the food bank today for the first time.

"I plan to make this a regular thing alongside my donations. It's been such a positive experience and I would have never thought about doing it had it not been for

Women's Running bringing it to my attention. The community centre has been there for 16 years and I never realised until now. So thank you!"



Esther says: *This is a gorgeous email to receive. I am thrilled that our chats on the podcast have an impact, and thank you so much for sharing your story – it's so inspiring.*

I am passionate about supporting Food Banks wherever possible, an ethos that our parent company shares.

This year, Anthem is supporting the Trussell Trust with the aim of raising awareness and funds for those desperately in need. If you're unable to get to your local food bank, please donate what you can at [justgiving.com/page/anthemstophunger](https://www.justgiving.com/page/anthemstophunger).

We hang out with

Amy Longley

Amy from Dorset is training for the Great North Run



Why do you run?

I felt I had let my physical and mental wellbeing slip after having my son, who didn't sleep well. I decided to do something about it and started following video workouts – but I was so out of shape I couldn't complete the warm-up!

My cousin, who is an avid runner, challenged me to run 1K a day. After I'd done that, I signed up for Couch to 5K and began to run regularly – slowly increasing my distance beyond 5K until I was able to complete a half marathon in 2:30. Running clears my head and I love it. It's also improved my mental health, I sleep better and I eat

what I want without worrying about my weight.

How do you train?

I'm part of the Lonely Goat running group on Facebook and the community is amazing. There is always somebody who can offer solutions, motivation and praise. Recently, I've learned that hill runs are good for increasing fitness so now I include a 5K hill run, a fast 4K run and one long run of at least 10K per week. I'm stunned at how my times have improved, how the hills seem easier and how I feel better in myself overall. I'm currently training for the Great North Run.

CLUB OF THE MONTH

REIGATE LADIES JOGGERS

A non-competitive running group where the emphasis is on fun and socialising



A busy social life is guaranteed when you join the Reigate Ladies Joggers, which celebrates its tenth birthday this year. There's always an exciting running event on offer – whether it's a weekend away trail running, an organised race outing or a talk about nutrition.

Known locally as RLJ, the club prides itself on offering an accessible environment where women can improve their mental and physical wellbeing and make firm friends in the process.

"It's become a wonderfully supportive group of women united together with a common goal and interest," says founder and coach Emma Mankelov. "We cater for everybody from complete beginners to regular runners."

As well as regular runs and social events (and there's lots of those planned this

year to celebrate the tenth anniversary), the club runs regular beginner and training course. Members can choose from five groups that head out at different paces – from the gentle through to the tempo session.

"We never leave anybody behind and there is no pressure," says Emma. "We are so proud of what the club has become and how much our members love it. It's so good for mental wellbeing as well as physical fitness, because you can really talk when you run alongside somebody. It's wonderfully supportive."

The club has more than 300 members with many opting for the popular £30 a month unlimited membership which allows you to attend as many events as you like. [Reigateladiesjoggers.co.uk](https://www.Reigateladiesjoggers.co.uk)

TELL US WHY YOUR CLUB SHOULD
BE CLUB OF THE MONTH
EMAIL WOMENSRUNNING@ANTHEM.CO.UK



MORE THAN JUST A RUN

How to harness the power of exercise
to nurture your mental health

Words: Lucy Waterlow

If you're feeling blue, then getting out for a run is one of the best things you can do to boost your mood.

A recent study carried out by the University of South Australia concluded that exercise is such a powerful tool in enhancing our wellbeing, it should be "a mainstay approach" in the management of depression, anxiety and mental health disorders.

The comprehensive research involving 128,119 participants found that "physical activity is 1.5 times

more effective than counselling or the leading medications".

These latest findings come as no surprise to Laura Brooks, who is the Head of Services at the charity Sport in Mind (SiM).

"If the benefits of exercise could be bottled up, it would be known as 'a wonder drug' and I am sure would be prescribed to everyone," she says. "Many people don't always consciously associate mental wellness with being physically active, and only notice it when it is absent through injury or for other reasons." »





// Exercise is a vehicle that can bring us together. By running with someone else, you can have a good catch-up, while being active at the same time. It's a win-win //

» **Feeling good**

Physical activity is an effective way to enhance our mental health because it prompts our brains to release feel-good hormones. These hormones boost happiness, self-esteem and improve the quality of our sleep.

Extra benefits can be gained if you exercise with others. Laura explains: "Exercising with other people – such as by running and chatting, or taking part in any type of team sport – provides a space and reason to bring people together. It creates a community,

which is something all human beings need." She also notes that modern life sometimes starves us of this essential human contact, saying: "Opportunities to meet and chat to each other seem to be getting fewer, with so many people now mostly working from home. In places like supermarkets, you can also avoid talking to anyone by using self-service tills.

"In contrast, exercise is a vehicle that can bring us together. By running with someone else, you can have a good catch up, while being active at the same time." It's a win-win.

For some, getting active can even be life-saving. "People experiencing serious mental health problems can have a life expectancy of 15-20 years fewer than the national average," Laura says. "This is mostly down to the physical health issues they've developed due to inactivity. So becoming more active, even just slightly, is key to improving quality of life, both physically and mentally."

Breaking down barriers

However, knowing something is good for us and actually being able to do it, are two different things. Women face numerous barriers in their bid to get active, from fears over the safety of running alone, to body image worries, and fitting in training around other responsibilities.

Those with mental health issues have even more hurdles to overcome. Crippling social anxiety, debilitating depression, and the side effects of medication might affect them accessing the very thing that could help them feel better. That's why Sport in Mind was founded in Reading in 2010, with the mission to "improve the lives of people experiencing mental health problems through sport and physical activity".

The charity delivers running and walking sessions, plus exercise classes and opportunities to participate in other sports and activities such as gardening, across England and Wales, in partnership with the NHS.

It was the brainchild of Neil Harris, who helped one of his childhood friends, Jamie, overcome his mental health issues by encouraging, and supporting, him to exercise.

Jamie had been suffering with depression, causing him to become isolated and disconnected from the world. He didn't want to socialise, or even go outside, and was unable to work full-time. Like many people who are struggling with their mental health, he was reluctant to engage with traditional means of help.

Neil encouraged him to get out of the house by joining him for a walk. Initially, they just went for one minute, then two, then three. Soon, being active became a habit and Jamie found his symptoms of depression significantly



reduced. His self-esteem soared and he was able to return to full-time employment. Now, more than a decade on, he continues to manage his mental health by engaging in sport and physical activity on a regular basis.

A helping hand

Seeing the difference being active made to his friend made Neil realise how many more people struggling with their mental health could benefit from having a means to access sport.

He says: "Sport in Mind is a really simple concept, something that many of us do every single week – taking part in sport and physical activity to help our mental health. With just a little helping hand, my friend Jamie was able to use physical activity to help improve his mental health."

Liz, 35, is one of the many women who has benefited from being involved with SiM. She says: "I've always enjoyed sport but it can be difficult to get involved in groups when you suffer from mental health problems. I've tried to join a few sports groups since experiencing anxiety but I've never felt very welcome. I was excited to learn about Sport in Mind and, as soon as I joined the group, everyone made me feel like I was their friend, it was so nice".

Sue, 28, agrees. She found SiM really helped her, after other methods to boost her mental health hadn't worked. "Every therapy session I have ever attended was awful and I just wanted to run away, but Sport in Mind is totally different. Is it even therapy session? I guess it is, but it is different. They are welcoming and fun, and they don't treat you like you are someone who is mentally ill, they treat you like a regular person. It is so refreshing."

Sue admits she has never been naturally sporty but that didn't matter when she got started with the running group. She says: "It isn't about being fit, sporty or a certain shape, it is about having fun, relaxing and being yourself."

For Elizabeth, the SiM sessions were a lifeline, especially following Covid lockdowns. She explains: "It gave me, and others, a real reason to get out of the house and socialise, while at the same time improving our physical and mental health."

Samantha, 40, agrees that joining the running group made a huge difference to her. "After a really bad patch in my life, attending Sport In Mind sessions encouraged me to get a regular routine and structure in my life again. This led to bigger and brighter things, like taking up music again and becoming a songwriter.

"The group runs enable me to get outdoors and when I'm outdoors it always lifts my mood, and it feels like I've accomplished something good for the day."

As a run leader for the charity, Laura has seen these transformations first-hand at the weekly run-walk sessions, which are open to anyone over the age of 16 who is experiencing mental health problems.

She recalls: "We had one woman who was extremely isolated and our jogging session was the only social interaction she would get from week to week. Slowly, as she felt ready, she began to talk more and more to those in the group. She started to grow in confidence, and then tried another Sport in Mind activity, something she had never tried before, Tai Chi.

"Her goal was to reduce her medication and to get a job, as she had never worked before. This was important for her independence and something she had been talking about for years.

"For her, we were a safe place where she could re-engage in a community and meet people. She discovered a love of running she never knew she had. With encouragement and lot of congratulations, after three months of joining us every week, she was working in a full-time job, and feeling much happier about the level of medication she was taking. Amazing!"

Success stories like this one are common at SiM, as being active helps people become more out-going and content. "Week on week, people grow in confidence and build friendships, talking and catching up about their days," says Laura.

"It is incredible to see how attendees, who were so anxious on their first visit, become the people welcoming new attendees and talking to them about the group."

// Sport in Mind is totally different. Is it even a therapy session? I guess it is, but it is different. They are welcoming and fun, and they don't treat you like you are someone who is mentally ill //

GET THE ENDORPHINS FLOWING

Other ways to boost your mental health

If you have all the will in the world to run, but can't due to reasons such as injury, or chronic fatigue, there are still other ways to boost your mental health

- **If you can't run, walk.**

Walking is super for physical as well as mental health. You can get out and get active with less physical strain than running. Swap journeys by car or public transport for your two feet, get a dog to give you a reason to get out every day, or join in a parkrun by walking, or being a tailwalker. Visit ramblers.org.uk/go-walking.aspx for inspiration for some scenic walking routes. They also organise wellbeing walks where you can walk and talk with others.

- **Immerse yourself in nature.** Studies have shown that the natural world can have a huge impact on our mental

health. Visiting forests, beaches and the countryside can release happy hormones in our brains, and reduce stress. You don't have to be able to get to a site of outstanding natural beauty; just being in your own garden or visiting a local park or open space can make a difference. Observe the wind in the trees, smell the flowers, listen to the birdsong, and feel instant calm.

- **Garden.** Gardening is an excellent way to get active without realising it. Mow the lawn, dig up some weeds and potter about potting bulbs and plants. It links into the point above about how relaxing in the natural world, while tending for your plants and flowers, will give your mind a focus away from any other worries. If you don't have a garden, you could apply for an allotment, create a window box or grow herbs or flowers in pots.

- **Meditate.** Meditating can calm the mind, lower blood pressure and improve sleep. It involves focusing on your breathing and being in the moment. You can combine it with being more active by doing Tai chi or yoga.

- **Talk.** It can be difficult to open up to others if you are struggling with your mental health. But there are people who can help and support you if you share how you are feeling. Confide in a friend or relate, arrange to see your GP for advice, or call a charity like the Samaritans, who have a free helpline: 116 123.

» You are not alone

For those unable to join in SiM sessions, there are lots of other ways to start running and feel part of the running community.

Some established running clubs can be off-putting to beginners, so seek out a group following a Couch to 5K plan.

There are women-only groups if this makes you feel more comfortable, and ones that meet during the day if you don't feel safe running after dark.

Visit runtogether.co.uk to find out which groups are available near you.

Another way to feel part of the running community is to join in at your local parkrun. These weekly meets are friendly and open to all abilities. You can walk the whole way if you can't run, and you won't be alone at the back as they always have volunteer tail-walkers. You could sign up to be a volunteer too, so you can still get involved by barcode scanning or marshalling if you don't yet feel ready to physically take part in the run.

If you're anxious about trying something new, Laura advises: "Going to a running group for the first time can be nerve-racking. For someone experiencing anxiety, or feeling isolated and lonely, it is an even bigger step.

"If you feel daunted about going along to a group, take someone with you, like a friend, a family member, neighbour or work colleague.

"One of the biggest barriers is walking through the door that very first time, so having someone you know beside you can make you feel better. And remember everyone at the group was a beginner once, so they will understand how you feel."

If you can't get to a group, you could form your own. "Someone else could be looking for the same motivation to exercise as you are. Try asking another mum to join you for a run after school drop-off, or invite a colleague to a gym class with you during your work lunch break," Laura recommends. "You'll both be less likely to back out if you are meeting one another, and making this a regular thing means you'll be more likely to stick to it."



// Higher intensity exercise had greater improvements for depression and anxiety while longer durations had smaller effects when compared to short and mid-duration bursts //

Hiring a run coach is another way to gain motivation and accountability if you don't have anyone you can run with, or don't feel confident to join a group. They can support you on a running plan so you don't feel like you are on the journey to fitness alone.

Perhaps you aren't the one struggling, but you want to help a friend or relative who is. You could offer to meet them for a walk or run or suggest targetting a race you can participate in together to motivate them to train.

If they don't live nearby, there are still ways you can support. "You could call one another to chat while you are both out walking, or agree to join an online class together," Laura suggests.

Small changes, big rewards

If you want to use exercise to enhance your mental health, then build up what you do gradually. You don't have to go straight into HIIT classes or sign up for a marathon. You could start by going for a walk at a certain time each week, and then that walk could eventually become a walk-run and then a full run.

Joining a Pilates or yoga class could be an entry point to more vigorous sessions which will get the endorphins flowing. Or if you don't want to progress to doing harder or longer workouts, that's fine too. The research by the University of South Australia found that even being active in small amounts can make a big difference.

"Our review shows that physical activity interventions can significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in all clinical populations, with



some groups showing even greater signs of improvement," explains lead researcher Dr Ben Singh.

"Higher intensity exercise had greater improvements for depression and anxiety, while longer durations had smaller effects when compared to short and mid-duration bursts. We found that all types of physical activity and exercise were beneficial, including aerobic exercise such as walking, resistance training, Pilates, and yoga.

"Importantly, the research shows that it doesn't take much for exercise to make a positive change to your mental health," Dr Singh confirms. 🧠

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH SPORT IN MIND

Sport in Mind delivers a number of sport and physical activity sessions across England and Wales. The sessions are open to anyone over 16 experiencing mental health problems, and carers. They are drop-in sessions and free to attend, and they are all about having fun in a relaxed non-judgemental environment. **To find out more, visit sportinmind.org or call 0118 947 9762**



MADE IN BARCELONA

Did you know that BUFF® was born in Barcelona?
And that most of its products are made there? There's a
lot more to the iconic brand than you might think...

BUFF® has become one of those words like Hoover, and Biro, and Google – and you don't become something like that without being great at what you do. So what sets this brand apart?

Home turf

A whopping 90% of BUFF®'s products are produced right on its doorstep in Barcelona, the birthplace of the company. And that's not just about keeping everything close at hand in one of the most beautiful cities in the world!

By manufacturing in Barcelona, BUFF® has been able to concentrate on reducing its carbon footprint. By cutting transport costs, lowering carbon emissions, and increasing the use of natural and recycled materials, BUFF® has stuck to its roots to help protect the planet.

Speaking of material, it's not just about location either. As a newly certified member of the B-Corp community, BUFF® proudly seeks out innovation to continually move towards a more sustainable future. Right now, 90% of BUFF® products are produced in-house in

Barcelona in a factory powered by 100% renewable electricity (30% of which comes from solar panels on the roof)!

All this, and it produces beautiful products too, not least its fan-favourite CoolNet collection. The neck gaiters we know and love are made from recycled plastic bottles, and we adore them for their innovative cooling technology, quick drying fabric and sweat-wicking properties. We also love them for the gorgeous prints and colours!

Those brilliant neck gaiters can be used as headbands, snoods, face coverings, wristbands, towels – you name it, we've done that! Not got one? You need one! 🧢



To view the collection and for more information on BUFF® and its sustainability initiatives, go to buff.com/gb/made-in-barcelona



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The original neckwear is ubiquitous for a reason: runners love them! With a huge variety of patterns and colours, its multi-functionality and UV protection make it an essential part of every runner's kit bag.





NEW EPISODES EVERY WEEK

Listen to the *Women's Running Podcast* for more updates on our running every week on Wednesdays. Join us on *Patreon* for exclusive workout plans, weekly newsletters from Esther and Holly, free access to Live podcasts, and bonus episodes. Patreon.com/womensrunning



TALES FROM THE POD

This month, Esther has been having near-religious moments at the chiropractors, and Holly has been having near-death experiences with snails

Holly

Esther absolutely blew my mind on the podcast a couple of weeks ago when she shared some training

advice with me about my slow runs. Apparently, they're meant to be – and get this – slow.

Being totally honest, I've always just run everything at the same pace. Bonus points if I actually manage to make it to the finish line. But, as it turns out, I could really benefit from running more slowly for about 80% of my training.

So, I'm giving it a go with my current training plan. I'm going a minute and a half slower than my usual 'race pace' (which, as we've established, is my only pace) and I'm really, really trying to stick to it. It's actually so much harder than you think – mainly because it takes longer to get back home to where the snacks are. But also because it takes serious discipline to be a proper plodder and override the instincts that are telling you to pick up the pace.

I'm hoping this is going to make the difference to my VO2 Max, which I've made my mission to improve recently. Esther and I also asked a clever Garmin expert for all the trade secrets on how

to do this, so be sure to check out that particular episode of the podcast if you haven't already.

In other fitness news, *Women's Running* marketing manager Cara and I have dipped our metaphorical and literal tootsies into wild swimming over the last few weeks. In theory, it's been idyllic: the sun has been shining, we've found the perfect spot and we've even got ourselves little poncho-towel-things to protect our dignity when we do that thing where you try and take your swimmers off from underneath your pants and inevitably flash an old man at some point.

However, most recently, we both woke up with what we thought were a million mosquito bites. After days of

Holly and Cara were all smiles before they succumbed to snail disease



horrific itching and manic Googling, we discovered that cercarial dermatitis is a thing – otherwise known as swimmer's itch. Brace yourself: it's tiny parasites that infect birds or mammals that are then brought into lakes and ponds by SNAILS. We've got snail disease.

Luckily, it usually goes away by itself; so, all being well, I'll stop scratching like a flea-ridden dog soon. It's also only a problem for a few weeks or months at most, as it thrives in the warmer weather.

Here my top tips for a successful wild swim so you can avoid snail-related misfortunes as much as is possible:

- Swim with a buddy. You'll want a pal for safety as well as for joy.
- Wear sunscreen. Obvs.
- Invest in a good wetsuit. Even when it's lovely weather, a wetsuit can help keep out nasty parasites like the aforementioned Death Snails.
- Shower straightaway. Some wild swimming spots have outdoor showers, so look out for these. This can also protect you from the nasties.
- Don't swim in places that you haven't researched, as you might be exposing yourself to raw sewage or worse. Did I mention HELL SNAILS?!



Enter the London Vitality 10,000 and hang out with these podcasting loons before and after the race

// My treatment consisted of him pushing my left (immobile) hip into a table, twice. Took about a minute. And that was it //

leg up, and then the other – a series of movements that took about five seconds.

From this simple movement, he deduced that while, yes, one of my legs was a bit longer than the other, the real issue was with my pelvis. On one side, I was hyper mobile and wagging around like no-one's business, and on the other I was stiff as a board. He explained things slightly more politely than that.

My 'treatment' consisted of him pushing my left (immobile) hip into a table, twice. Took about a minute. And that was it.

Two weeks on from this groundbreaking treatment, and my quad isn't niggling, my toe is normal, my glutes are only complaining about the squats I did yesterday, and my lower back is the happiest it's been in months.

I'm telling you this so you don't do what I do: if you've been living in pain from injuries, go and get some help!

Don't run through it! Don't ignore it! A chiropractor is just one of many types of brilliant people who might help deduce the reason for your niggles and help you find a path back to pain-free running.

Please find a genius to snap you back into shape – but not MY genius as I'm keeping him all to myself now that I've finally found him. 🧠

Esther

It's been almost two months since the London Marathon, and I finally feel like I can see light at the end of the tunnel.

I was beset with injuries in the fortnight that followed, when I had clearly jumped back on the running bus far too early, but time is strange in the days after a marathon – it felt like I'd given myself ample recovery.

My body was having none of it however. My quad gave way, my big toe was having a moment, and I started having issues with my knee. And then, about three weeks after the marathon, my right glute seized up, and my lower back started complaining. I felt like I was falling apart – and I know it sounds silly, but I honestly couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong.

My PT recommended a chiropractor. I'm not going to lie: I've never been to one of those before, and I've always been wary. I met a GP at a wedding once who drunkenly told me that anyone other than physios or GPs were essentially witch doctors, and for some reason I decided to take her word for it, despite the fact that she was about 17 sheets to the wind.

Finding myself ever more crippled on a daily basis, increasingly more fragile, and running becoming a painful struggle, I thought, well, why not? What harm could it do?

Let me tell you right now: it was a revelation. The chiro, when I met him, told me firmly that he would only be able to concentrate on one thing at a time, as I started to launch into my various ailments. I was miffed, but suggested my back might be the thing: a slipped disc that had been rumbling for six years.

"Six years?" he raised an eyebrow. He then asked me to stand up and lift one



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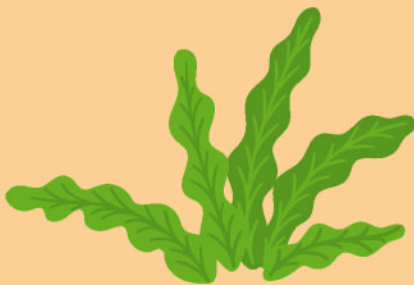
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COACH

How to recover // Train for endurance // How I train





How to...

RECOVER BETTER

Looking after yourself better after your run isn't self-indulgent: good recovery will actually make you stronger and fitter – here's how to do it well

Words: Anna Harding

When you've been for a run, it's important to factor recovery in to your schedule, in order to be able to get back out running again. In this article, we'll look at different recovery techniques and products so you can work out which might best work for you.

DOMs

First of all, let's talk aches and pains. As a runner, it's totally normal to feel some aches after a run; they are your body's way of telling you that you've worked the muscles. Aches affect people of all fitness levels and aren't something to worry about, but if your aches turn into actual pain, that's the time to see a medical professional for a diagnosis.

DOMs is a consideration for many runners. It's an acronym for

delayed-onset muscle soreness and is most commonly felt by runners who are starting out completely new, coming back from a long period of rest, or who have pushed themselves hard during a run, like an intervals session or hill sprints, or a race.

DOMs shows up between 24 and 48 hours after an activity and the reason it happens is because of microscopic damage to the muscle fibres. Scientists believe this damage causes pain and indicates that the muscle has been worked hard.

It's important to say that, although painful, DOMs isn't a cause for concern. It's the beginning of a cycle of your body adapting to the training stimulus you have given it. When bodybuilders talk about getting 'ripped', it's these microtears and the subsequent healing of them that play a part; they are critical to

building muscle mass, so you don't need to be concerned.

Golden Hour

Golden Hour is the first 60 minutes after you finish exercising or when you get back from a run. According to research, this is when your muscles absorb the most nutrients, and glycogen is replaced the most efficiently. In other words, it's the prime time to prioritise rehydrating and refuelling.

We all know how easy it is to get back from a run and dive straight back into your everyday life. If you manage to squeeze a run in at lunchtime, for example, you might only have an hour to warm up, run, cool down, shower, and then be back at your desk. In an ideal world, though, you need to factor in a bit of time to recover too. »

Hydration

Water makes up 60% of your total body weight but it dwindles during the day through sweating, urinating and even just breathing. This natural water loss is accelerated when you run and exercise.

The best thing you can do for your recovery, as soon as you're back from a run, is to drink water. It's important that you replace the fluids lost during exercise through sweat, as it helps to restore your electrolyte balance. Electrolytes are essential for our bodies to function because they balance the amount of water in our body, move waste out of our cells and make sure that our nerves, muscles, heart and brain work the way they should.

As a very rough rule of thumb, for every kilogram of bodyweight you lose on a run, you need to drink one-and-a-half litres of fluid to replace it. If you want to be really scientific, the best way to work out your needs is to weigh yourself before you run and then when you get back afterwards. For most people, though, it's enough to simply drink little and often throughout the day. You can even buy water bottles that have drink reminders printed on them, which encourage you to drink a certain amount of water by certain points in the day.

Refuelling

When you run, depending on the type of run you're doing, your body uses energy from glycogen which is stored in your muscles. Glycogen is the stored form of glucose that's made up of connected glucose molecules. Glucose, which is considered a natural sugar when consumed directly from whole foods such as apricots and dates, is your body's main source of energy and it comes from carbohydrates in foods.

You've probably heard runners talk about 'carb-loading' before a race. Simply put, carb-loading is topping up those stores to make sure you have plenty of

reserves available, which are then topped up during longer endurance efforts with things like energy gels and sports drinks. There is only a finite amount of glycogen that your body can store in muscles though; studies show that most people can store a maximum of 15 grams of glycogen per kilogram of body mass.

Replacing your glycogen stores after a run doesn't need to mean having a huge

meal. Eating something that contains both protein and carbs will give the best results, so try a piece of toast with some peanut butter on or a simple flapjack.

Protein is one of the most discussed topics in sports nutrition, and for good reason. It is

the second-most abundant molecule in fat-free bodily tissues (water being the most abundant). Not only is it involved in nearly all bodily functions and processes, protein plays a pivotal part in recovery too. This is why it's recommended that you eat something containing both carbohydrates and protein after a run. The UK's Eatwell Guide recommends that about 20-25% of a day's nutrition comes from high-protein sources, with an emphasis on fish as a protein source.

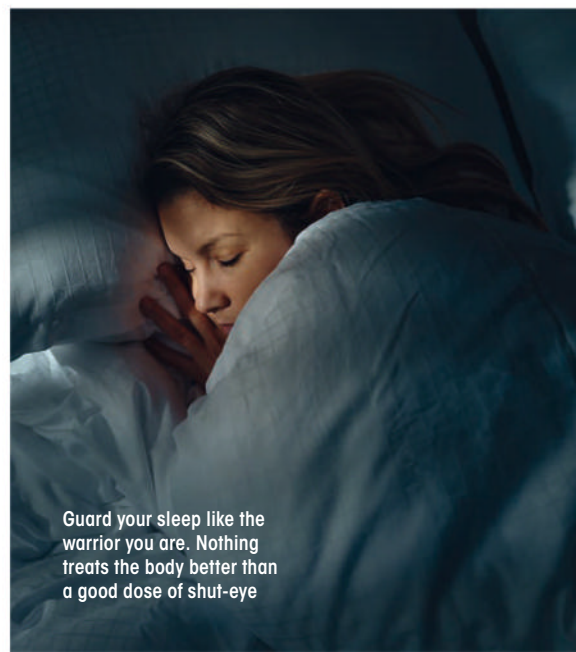
Studies have shown that most women need between 50 and 60 grams of protein per day although this number can vary due to a number of factors like how active you are and your age.

Sleep

Before we get into the products that are marketed to help promote recovery, there is one vital factor that is completely free and available to you, and that is sleep.

There's a reason why elite athletes get a minimum of nine hours of sleep a night and schedule naps into training days. When they sleep, their bodies are repairing any micro-damage caused by exercise. There's an increase in blood flow to their muscles, which means more oxygen and nutrients to help repair and regenerate cells.

// Protein plays a pivotal role in recovery. It's recommended you eat something with protein and carbohydrates after a run //



Guard your sleep like the warrior you are. Nothing treats the body better than a good dose of shut-eye



Now, we don't all have the luxury of daytime naps or uninterrupted sleep of nine hours or more; family, work and sleep problems can all put paid to that. But in order to get the most out of your recovery, getting as much good-quality sleep as you can should be high on your agenda.

Good-quality sleep can look different to us all, but there are some ways to ensure good sleep 'hygiene' – a term used to describe your surroundings and sleep habits. Avoiding caffeine in the afternoon, scrolling on your phone too close to bedtime and making sure you

have a dark, cool room to sleep in are some of the easy adaptations you can make to increase the likelihood of a good night's sleep.

Rest days

When you're following a training plan for a specific race, you'll see that there are rest days included in the schedule. These are just as important as your training days because, when you run, you create an impact load on your body which causes microscopic tears in our muscle fibres, as well as stressing our entire physiological system. Running makes

your cardiovascular system work hard, causing changes in your metabolism, as well as creating an impact on your immune system.

The goal with recovery is to restore the body's homeostasis. In simple terms, homeostasis is a state of balance within the body when our internal conditions are stable and relatively constant. When rest brings on homeostasis, it helps you run better in the long term too!

We need to allow time for our bodies to recover and adapt to the training and, depending on the types of runs you're doing, there is often a training response at a cellular level. For aerobic endurance, this might mean changes in muscle mitochondria, which help our body with energy production. When it comes to resistance training or harder running sessions, muscle cells add protein to allow more forceful contractions. It's these adaptations which ultimately lead to an increase in performance. Giving the body a chance to recover allows the muscle fibres to rebuild and strengthen.

Some areas of the body need more time for recovery than others. For example, our tendons, which connect muscle to bone, take longer to repair than muscle tissue. This is because blood flow to the tendons is not as good as it is to muscle tissues, which have higher vascularity.

It can be really tempting to look at your rest days and use them as an opportunity to take part in another activity instead, like hiking up a mountain or heading to an exercise class at the gym. Rest days can feel like bonus time to do the things you can't do when you're running. To maximise your recovery, you need to treat rest days as days when you do nothing active, and you need to make sure they're spread out across your training week too. There's little benefit in training for three or four days in a row and then resting for the rest of the week; the rest days are there to recover from the previous day of training.

As a final note on rest days, when you get into the flow of running and training, you can fall into the trap of feeling guilty for not going for a run, or putting your feet up for a day. Rest day guilt is felt by many runners, but you need to ignore it and instead to see it as a chance to do other things and enjoy some time off your feet.



Practice makes perfect when it comes to self massage but it's a technique that is useful to have in your recovery armoury

Recovery runs

The idea of recovery runs might sound counterintuitive. Running for recovery, after all we've said about the importance of rest days, just sounds silly. But there are benefits to incorporating recovery runs into your training.

It depends how advanced you are with your running and how often you're lacing up. Some elites who run twice a day will often do a recovery run as the second of their two daily workouts. If you have a high training volume that your body can cope with and you're doing upwards of 30 miles a week regularly, then a recovery run the day after a hard run like sprints or a long run, can actually benefit your recovery. If you tend to do all of your runs at a conversational pace then you might not need to factor recovery runs into your schedule.

Recovery runs are done at a relaxed pace which is even slower than your normal easy pace. You can measure that either by monitoring your heart rate or by doing the 'talk test'. If you're able to hold a conversation while you're doing your recovery run, you're probably running at the right pace.

Recovery runs should be reasonably short in duration and length. Once you start running for longer than 60 minutes your run is no longer a recovery run, because you're asking more of your body to keep going. And for most hobbyist runners, rest days should not be substituted for a recovery run; you'll see more benefits from total rest.

Foam rolling and massage

Foam rolling is a type of massage, except you do it yourself. The fancy term for

it is 'self myofascial release', which is sometimes shortened to SMR. Fascia is the connective tissue that surrounds muscles and organs in the body. It's important that this support structure for the body works well, to allow for efficient movement. Foam rolling applies pressure to muscles and other tissues such as tendons and ligaments, softening fascia tissue and relaxing your muscles.

Foam rollers differ in firmness and durability, and the force you apply is up to you. Most people find the sensation of foam rolling slightly unpleasant, but it should never be painful so ease off the pressure if it's causing you pain.

If someone else is applying the pressure to your muscles, it can be more effective than doing it yourself. It increases the number of white blood cells, which fight infection, and decreases



levels of cortisol (the ‘stress hormone’) which is linked to chronic inflammation. If your budget can stretch to a sports massage, it’s worth looking at booking in regularly with a sports massage therapist or physiotherapist.

Percussive therapy

Massage guns are handheld tools that massage our muscles through rapid bursts of pressure in concentrated pulses. These vibrations aim to help loosen up tight and sore muscles and stimulate blood flow to help increase recovery.

Percussive massage treatment has gained in popularity in recent years, although surprisingly, the first percussive massager was developed and patented as far back as 1974. A study on the benefits of percussive therapy in 2020 found that, just like a conventional massage by a therapist, our range of movement can be increased by a handheld percussive massage treatment without having an effect on muscle strength.

Be cautious in using these types of recovery tools, though, as they are only as good as the user. You may end up using it incorrectly, or targeting the wrong areas and there’s a chance you might end up making things worse for yourself if you use it in the wrong way.

CBD and turmeric

More and more products containing CBD and turmeric are popping up, claiming to be of benefit for recovery, but how much substance is there behind the claim? Cannabidiol, most commonly known by its abbreviation CBD, is a chemical substance found in cannabis that is claimed to have medical benefits. It is completely legal and does not contain any psychoactive properties, nor is it addictive.

There are a number of benefits of CBD oil, including its anti-inflammatory properties, its anxiety prevention and its power to relieve pain. All this points

to it being a useful tool in running recovery and in 2018, the World Health Organisation released a report which found no adverse health issues in users of pure CBD. The report did highlight possible side effects, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and dizziness so, as with any supplements, it’s important to seek medical advice before taking anything new that you’re not used to.

// Foam rolling applies pressure to muscles, tendons and ligaments, softening fascia tissue and relaxing your muscles //

The main active compound in turmeric – curcumin – has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and there is some compelling evidence to support its use by sportspeople. For example, a study by Delecroix et al. in 2017 reported

that 2 grams of curcumin and 20 grams of piperine (an alkaloid present in black pepper) supplementation helped offset some muscle soreness after an intense workout by elite rugby players

Other recent scientific studies into curcumin have concluded that its use reduces the perception of muscle pain associated with exercise, lessens muscle damage and fatigue and increases muscle glycogen content. If you’re going to try it, scientists recommend taking it before, during and up to 72 hours after exercise.

Mental wellbeing

It’s a well known fact that our physical and mental health is interlinked. As a runner, you will recognise the benefits of the endorphins that are released when you run and you’ll no doubt have experienced a rush of feel-good energy too. Giving yourself the time to focus on your recovery will boost the feelgood vibes, helping you relax and unwind and giving something back to your body.

It’s tricky to fit everything in when you’re working, juggling family and life commitments and running, but blocking out time to recover will pay you back hugely in the long run – both physically and mentally. 🧘





ULTRA ENDURANCE TRAINING PLAN

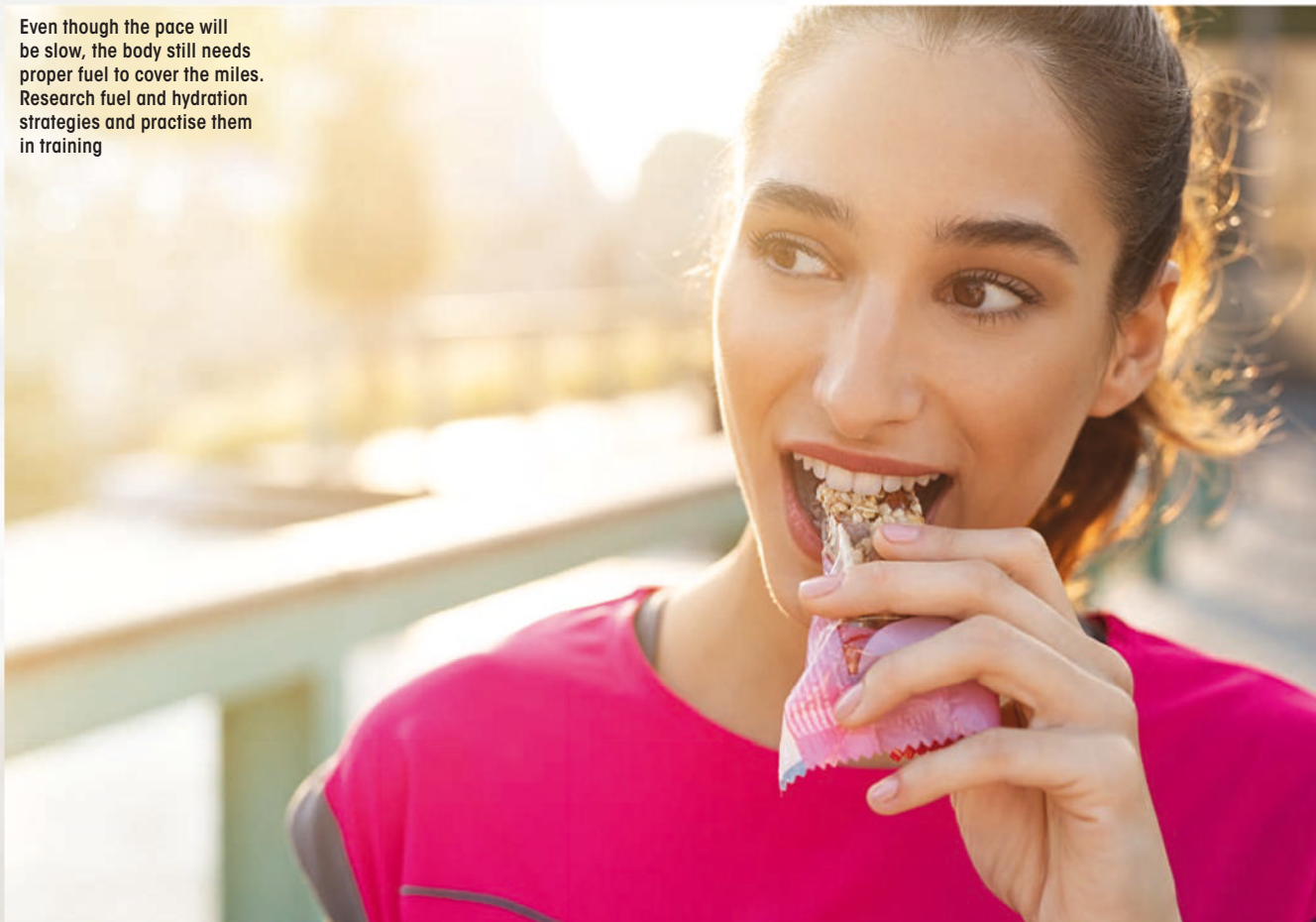
Whether you've done a marathon or not, you may be hearing the insistent call of the ultra distance... we're forever hearing that us women are great at longer-distance running and it's also something that can be attempted at any age. For this plan, you need to be able to run a half marathon distance at the outset, so if you're ready, let's get going!

Words and plan by: **Laura Fountain**



Satisfaction guaranteed. How liberating is the knowledge that you can run for miles and miles?

Even though the pace will be slow, the body still needs proper fuel to cover the miles. Research fuel and hydration strategies and practise them in training



// Back-to-back long runs are an important part of ultra marathon training. Going into your Sunday run with tired legs from the Saturday run will help you get used to the feeling of race-day fatigue //


When it comes to testing your limits, there's nothing quite like seeing just how far you can run. More and more runners are ignoring their pace and concentrating on endurance as they push themselves to run further than they have before.

Endurance running can really cover everything from a 5K upwards, because all distances from 5K right through to a 100-mile race are run using the aerobic energy system. That said, not many of us think of a 5K as an endurance event! When considering a longer distance, there's a bit more to think about in terms of pace, hydration and fuelling.

Eating on the go

Fuelling your body to run a long way can be a trial-and-error journey, but one thing is certain: you're going to need a lot of snacks. While runners tackling a half marathon or marathon might favour energy gels as they're easy to carry and quick to take on the go, those running further than a marathon (or just in less of a hurry) will have time to experiment with real food such as dried fruit, sandwiches and flapjacks.

The key is to have something that won't get too squished in your bag, is easy to eat while walking, tastes nice and is packed with energy in the form of carbohydrate. »



Set your eyes on the prize with our simple 20-week ultra training plan

» Slowing down

Ultra endurance events are all about 'time on your feet' and building up your training volume, so you can forget about pace and focus on the duration of your run. As you will mainly be using your aerobic energy system you need to build aerobic fitness, and to do that you need to train within your aerobic energy zone. This means that for the majority of your runs, you'll be keeping the pace nice and easy.

The problem, however, is that most runners run their easy runs and long runs too fast to fully capitalise on the aerobic benefits of their runs. Easy runs should be 60-70% of your max heart rate; if you don't have a heart rate monitor, you can think of this as 6 out of 10 effort, a pace at which you should be able to hold a conversation.

Run/walking to run further

Very few ultra runners will run for hours without stopping for the occasional walk. They will likely walk while eating and drinking, walk up any steep hills and may even walk as part of a planned run/walk method.

There's no reason why you have to do all your training runs without stopping either. Give run/walking a try and practise it on your long runs. Just run for a set distance and walk for a set duration. For example, taking a one-minute walk break every 10 minutes will help break down a long run – and it can even end up in you posting a faster time that you would have if you'd run all the way.

Choosing your race

There are lots of long distance events out there to choose from. Some are lapped courses while others are point-to-point races. Some will take place across a number of days, and others will be one day of running. While most races will see you covering a set distance, some will challenge you to run as far as you can in a given time period (usually 12 or 24 hours). You should have no problem finding something that appeals to you whether you want scenic and hilly, coastal and wild, or flat and less picturesque. 🏃



THE ULTRA ENDURANCE PLAN

This plan will help you train towards an ultra endurance run up to 60K or a double marathon weekend

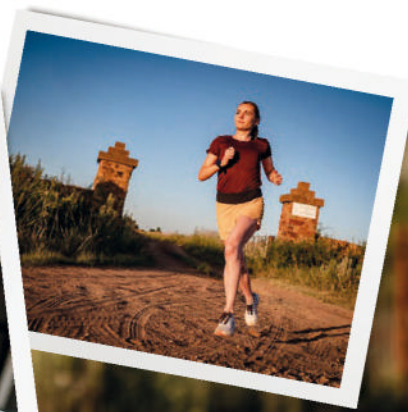
Before starting this plan, you should be able to complete a half marathon distance and should be comfortable running four to five times per week. If you're yet ready to run that far, start with one of our half marathon training plans first.

Back-to-back long runs are an important part of ultra marathon training. Going into your Sunday run with tired legs from your Saturday run will help you get used to the feeling of race-day fatigue. Of course, you

don't have to do your long runs on Saturday and Sunday if other days work better for you because of other commitments – the key is making sure they happen on consecutive days.

Replicate the terrain of your race in your training, so if you've picked a hilly race, include hills in your training runs. Don't forget to use the training runs in this programme to practise your fuel and hydration plan too.

WEEK	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	–	30 mins	40 mins	40 mins	–	60 mins	1 hour 45 mins
2	–	40 mins	40 mins	40 mins	–	40 mins	60 mins
3	–	40 mins	50 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 10 mins	2 hours
4	–	40 mins	50 mins	40 mins	–	40 mins	60 mins
5	–	40 mins	60 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 20 mins	2 hours 15 mins
6	–	40 mins	60 mins	40 mins	–	40 mins	1 hour 20 mins
7	–	40 mins	1 hour 10 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 30 mins	2 hours 30 mins
8	–	40 mins	1 hour 10 mins	40 mins	–	60 mins	1 hour 30 mins
9	–	40 mins	1 hour 20 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 40 mins	2 hours 45 mins
10	–	40 mins	1 hour 20 mins	40 mins	–	60 mins	1 hour 40 mins
11	–	40 mins	1 hour 30 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 40 mins	3 hours
12	–	40 mins	1 hour 30 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 20 mins	1 hour 40 mins
13	–	40 mins	1 hour 40 mins	40 mins	–	1 hour 40 mins	3 hours 15 mins
14	–	50 mins	1 hour 40 mins	50 mins	–	1 hour 20 mins	1 hour 40 mins
15	–	50 mins	1 hour 40 mins	50 mins	–	1 hour 40 mins	3 hours 30 mins
16	–	50 mins	1 hour 40 mins	50 mins	–	1 hour 20 mins	1 hour 40 mins
17	–	50 mins	1 hour 40 mins	50 mins	–	1 hour 40 mins	26.2 miles
18	–	50 mins	1 hour 40 mins	50 mins	–	1 hour 20 mins	1 hour 40 mins
19	–	40 mins	–	60 mins	–	–	1 hour 40 mins
20	–	30 mins	30 mins	30 mins	–	–	Race



Aimee is 25 years old and wants to make her mark in global athletics

HOW I TRAIN

Aimee Pratt

Despite finishing seventh in the world last year, track runner Aimee Pratt still approaches her running with enjoyment as her top priority

What's the hardest race you've ever done?

My first 3000m steeplechase in 2014 at the English championships. I was 16 years old and woefully undertrained for the distance. I swore I was never competing in a steeplechase race again, which lasted until the next summer season came around and I couldn't help myself! Luckily, that extra year of training served me well and I gradually began to find the event less gruelling.

Where's your favourite route or place to train?

I have run in so many beautiful places around the world that I find it really difficult to choose just one, but one of my favourite places is definitely in Flagstaff, Arizona, during springtime. It is always packed with athletes from varying nations chasing their own goals. The cinder trails are really good for getting a big block of mileage in without putting too much strain on your legs, and the altitude is great for increasing red blood cells.

What session do you love doing the most?

I really enjoy a hard track workout. Something like 10 x 400m with one minute recovery. I know that when I can complete this session strongly, I am in good shape and track season is just around the corner.



ABOUT AIMEE

Aimee Pratt is a Manchester-based British 3000m steeplechase runner. She's also a new addition to Swiss sportswear brand On's (on-running.com) growing roster of track athletes. Aimee set not only one but two British records to finish in a prestigious seventh place at the World Championships last year and we're excited to see what she'll achieve next. @aimeepratt_

What's running taught you?

It's taught me that life is all about perspective and nothing is ever as bad as it seems in the moment. There are many things I have not yet achieved or experienced within running and I hope that I have a long career ahead yet to

complete them. One of my biggest goals in a few years is to complete a marathon.

What's your greatest achievement?

I think it's probably finishing seventh in the World Championships in 2022. I ran a British record to qualify and then I bettered my time again in the final. The experience opened my eyes to how good I could be globally and it will hopefully be a stepping stone to greater things in the future.

What's your favourite pre-race meal?

Something simple like toast with peanut butter or cereal. Breakfast is definitely my favourite meal of the day and if I'm doing an evening race, I will usually eat three breakfast variants for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

And your favourite piece of kit?

On Cloudmonster for sure! I love them for both recovery and long runs.

What's your best advice for runners?

Remember that all you can ever do is your best. Be kind to yourself and never take it all too seriously. Running and all sport is there to be enjoyed! 🏃‍♀️





KIT

Shoes // Clothes // Tech

Women's Running

How we test

Our kit is tested by real runners: passionate women with diverse running experiences, from dedicated marathoners to happy plodders. We wear the clothes, run

in the shoes and use the tech on our usual runs to see if they go the distance. We then give each piece of kit our star rating. Prices are RRP and correct at time of printing.



POOR Disappointing, low-level performance



STANDARD Provided basic levels of performance in function, fit and style



GOOD Solid all-round performance: a good value, reliable piece of kit



GREAT Performed above expectations and impressed with function and fit



BEST Brilliant performance from highly technical, stylish kit

ESSENTIAL KIT

NEW RELEASE SHOES

Putting your next trainers through their paces



// These shoes are so easy to run in they will probably suit anyone. They really suited my narrow feet. The colours are bold too! //



LASPORTIVA Jackal II Boa

£170 / lasportiva.com
Tester *Tina*

The fit?

Spot on for me, with room for your toes to expand without having so much space that your feet may move in the shoe. They feel quite secure in the upper. Much more of a snug, than roomy, fit.

The comfort

Very comfy, although the higher material above the ankle caused a rub; not being used to wearing a high fit I was expecting this, and my thicker trail socks sorted it

quickly. The whole foot feels like it's got wraparound support.

What they're for

Those trail runners who want more support around the ankle and/or a gaiter substitute. These are perfect for long-distance runs that may be challenging.

Who is this shoe for?

They're so easy to run in they will probably suit anyone. They really suited my narrow feet. The colours are bold too if you like this!

On the run

There's just so much to talk about. These are the types of shoes that you feel comfortable in straight away. The outsole grip worked well, with aggressive lugs, though the trails are drying up now, so they weren't challenged as much as during winter. The best feature is the BOA lacing system, and with two dials (I've only run in a shoe with one before), you can adjust the fit across the front of the ankle as well as over the front of the top of your foot. This makes such a

difference to being able to personalise the fit and ensure zero heel slippage. The midsole felt like it was delivering energy back to my legs, the Gore-Tex lining is going to protect from rain, and the high heel collar is mesh to keep out grit but also allow air to flow.

Should you buy them?

They're a joy to run in, so it's a yes!





BROOKS Adrenaline GTS 23

£135 / brooksrunning.com / Tester Rachel I

The fit

The 23 edition of this legendary shoe fits just as well as its predecessors; they give excellent support to runners who over pronate, and the knitted upper is flexible from the first wear. I've been wearing Adrenalines for over a decade so they sort of feel like a second skin on the foot.

The comfort

I've reviewed a lot of maximalist shoes recently and I have to say I felt a bit underwhelmed when I first put these on. They don't have the crazy bounce of the high stack soles and I didn't get an unboxing wow factor from these.

What they're for

Brooks Adrenaline GTS shoes are for runners who like a supportive shoe and want something they can rely on mile after mile. It doesn't matter if you're a newbie or a veteran with these – they are all-round good guys.

On the run

I reach for different shoes depending on the run – and what I can find in my shoe box! I have runners for short speedy runs, gnarly trails, muddy paths and really hot days. But I always reach for my Adrenalines when I'm going a bit further and I don't want any niggles to play up. As I said, having reviewed a few high stacks recently, and having been initially un-wowed by the look of these, I forgot how good they are to run in. I felt more sure-footed and agile in these and far less liable to twist my ankle or trip up on those longer adventures. It was like welcoming an old friend back.

Should you buy them?

If you want a stalwart shoe that will see you through mile after mile, I still think there's no better than the Adrenalines. However, Brooks shouldn't rest on its laurels because other manufacturers are making bigger and more impactful advances at the moment.



HOKA Transport

£120 / hoka.com / Tester Louise

The fit

Roomy on first try, but after a long run in the heat they felt perfect. I normally like a narrower shape over the front of the shoe, but I was surprised how the slightly wider toe box came into its own, and offered more breathability and room for the toes to expand.

The comfort

The shoe has a 'super critical midsole foam', which gives plenty of bounce, while at the same time feeling light. The lightweight mesh upper feels airy and breathable and my feet don't over heat after a run. The thin, soft tongue sits lightly on the front of the foot and doesn't rub.

What they're for

These suit runners doing both long distance and shorter speed sessions. They are stylish and good for everyday gym – or even casual – wear, and as with many shoes from this brand, they are lighter than they look (just 250gm), which means they carry well in the gym bag and increase your pace on a treadmill.

On the run

The smooth-riding rocker gives a great heel-to-toe transition, so from the first moment you start your run, you feel strong and encouraged to run fast. I have run on both pavements and grass in these, and they felt stable enough for uneven ground, as well as light on tarmac too. They are slightly bigger than I normally wear, with that space in the toebox, and I was concerned they might slip off the heel, but as soon as I was out running, they adapted and felt like the perfect fit.

Should you buy them?

Yes definitely. This is a shoe that would appeal to a wide demographic of runners, rather than a niche market. From an aesthetic perspective, the metallic design on the upper also looks good – when not caked in mud!



UNDERARMOUR Flow Dynamic

£115 / underarmour.co.uk / Tester Holly

The fit

I loved the flexibility of the IntelliKnit upper: it feels snug and supportive, but doesn't feel too tight on my wide feet. I sized up for these shoes, but I would suggest half a size is all you need: there's plenty of room in the toebox and strategic stretch in all the right places.

The comfort

They definitely tick most of my boxes for a good cross-training shoe, and I found them really comfy for HIIT classes and strength training. They have a softer sole that offers lovely cushioning when doing impact work, and the way the upper wraps around your foot feels secure but not too compressed. The heel is plush, but did take a small amount of wearing in for me. I didn't massively get on with the tongue, which I found chafed the front of my ankles.

What they're for

I'd recommend these for gym-goers and strength training fans with the caveat that, while they are definitely versatile enough for running sessions, they might not be your go-to shoe for a new PB or a midweek tempo run. They're an excellent choice if you need extra support.

On the run

I tested these on short road runs, and they provided excellent support with decent comfort. I can definitely see myself doing longer plods in these and I like the seamless ride they offer. I have to dock a mark for responsiveness, though: these are hailed as a running/cross-training hybrid shoe, but I didn't feel enough energy return from them to compete with other lightweight running shoes.

Should you buy them?

At £115, I'd say you get a lot of bang for your buck with this shoe. It might not fulfil your every requirement, but it'll definitely see you through tough cross-training sessions and slower runs.



GROUP TEST SUMMER TRAIL ESSENTIALS

Heading off road now the rain and mud has abated? You'll want some of these...



CAMELBAK Zephyr Pro Vest 12L & Lifestraw Crux 2L Reservoir

£140 & £40 / camelback.co.uk / Tester Esther

This bladder has seen me through two marathons, with no issues, no matter how hard I bite the cap. The pack fits well but I'd like a female fit, and I'd prefer stretch material to ensure it doesn't bounce. It has adjustable straps, a stowable trekking pole quiver, and bags of accessible front storage.



DECATHLON Evadict Trail Running T-Shirt

£9.99 / 4-12 / decathlon.co.uk / Tester Sabrina

This is a really great technical tee. It's light, fits well and gives me enough room to sweat and for air to flow easily. I was a little worried about its ability to perform and keep me comfortable on the run, as I haven't worn a Decathlon tee before, but I needn't have worried. The colour is super light and summery and the lettering on the front lets people know that I'm a trail runner! Win win.



ELEVENATE La Bise Jacket

£150 / XS-XL / elevenate.com / Tester Rachel I

This is a lovely superlight summer running jacket which weighs in at 0.14kg. It fits nicely; figure-fitting but with plenty of room to get those arms driving back and forth. I love the colour of mine... a nice bright red with a blue edge to the white zip that gives it a slight 70s tracksuit vibe. There's a good pocket on one side, a well-fitting hood and cosy cuffs. Most importantly for me, it offers great breathability.



INOV-8 UltraPac Pro 8

£140 / inov-8.com / Tester Louise

This felt breathable, light and stretchy, and gave little bounce. It can carry eight litres, with detachable tubes, so is useful on a long training run, and you have the choice to wear bottles on the lower or chest pockets. The wraparound pocket is great for when you need to grab something on the run, while the two larger pockets on the back good for extra layers. There are two handy pole attachments.



INOV-8 Race Belt

£35 / inov-8.com / Tester Lucy

This belt is wide so has plenty of space for gels, snacks and valuables. I tested it out on a few training runs, and found it comfortable. Only one of the pockets has a zip, which means it's easy to grab nutrition on the move, but increases the risk of items falling out. You can stow folded poles in the elastic loop and grab them without breaking your stride, and the strap is easy to adjust with minimal bounce.



JANJI Multipass Sling Bag

£48 / uk.janji.com / Tester Sarah

This is a waist bag but it can also be worn as a sling across the body which is just as comfy. The fit is superb and the bag does not move thanks to a clever third strap which keeps it secure, and the easy-to-pull loops which tighten it around the waist. There are two zipped pockets and a key chain, and you can even stow a water bottle and keep it secure with a bungee pull tie.





BROOKS High Point Shorts

£60 / XS-XXL / brooksrunning.com / Tester Rachel I

Squeal – I love these shorts. And I’m not even sure why! It feels kind of like fancying someone who is just not your type, but being unable to resist them at the school disco! I love the weird orange/brown colour, the shocking pink contrasts and the white piping. Of course, the materials are soft and airy and the styling is great for trails, with water and tear protection and UPF+30, four hip pockets and a rear zipped one. I felt like the sizing of the top short was a bit tighter than I’d like so might be worth sizing up. Other than that, 100% weird crush!



MESSYWEEKEND Tempo Sunglasses

£85 / messyweekend.com
Tester Esther

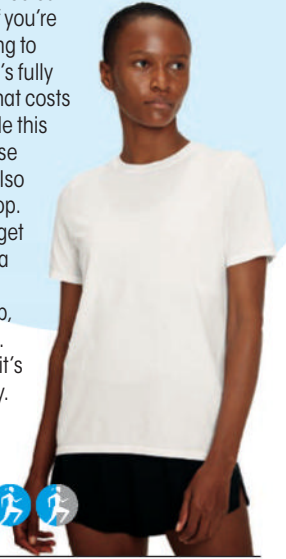
I love a pair of running sunnies that don’t look like running sunnies – if you know what I mean. These look fab on a run and also when you’re not on a run but the thing that really sets them apart from the average is that they are super light – I mean featherlight. So they’re wonderful to wear, with no irritation or annoyance. However, they were a smidge too big to fit snugly so I found that they slipped down my nose in hotter weather – a rubber nose grip (or tighter arms) would prevent this. Even so, they’re very nearly almost full marks, because they look and feel gorgeous (mine were in an army green, which I loved). Worth having a browse on the site too, as their range is consistently cool, and the model photography really helps you decide on what might be the right shape for you.



ON Cyclon-T

£85 / XS-XL / on-running.com
Tester Esther

This is a really tricky one to rate, because environmentally speaking this is a hero product. Its fully recycled and 100% recyclable – you can return the top to On to recycle when you’ve run it to death. The top itself is great – the material is soft, and the length is brilliant, but some might not like its whiteness, which can be a bit transparent, and I found the shaping around the shoulders to be a bit blocky. You can only buy this top if you’re already subscribing to the CloudNeo, On’s fully recyclable shoe that costs £25 a month, while this is a single purchase item – you don’t also subscribe to the top. That said, you do get what you pay for: a beautifully made, eco-conscious top, that will last years. So, on that basis, it’s worth every penny.



PROVIZ Running Singlet

£19.99 / 8-16 / provizsports.com / Tester Rachel I

This is a classic vest in a neon pink and with extra reflective details for those summer nights. It fits true to size and is quite lengthy, sitting perfectly on or just below the hip. I love the range of movement I have in this – it’s neither skintight nor loose – and the 100% polyester is breathable and soft and washes well. My only complaint is that I didn’t find it the most flattering, but it is functionally faultless.



TRACKSMITH Midweight Sweatshirt Hoodie

£110 / XS-XL / tracksmith.com / Tester Tina

Unlike traditional hoodies, this one is perfect for the summer season. It’s made from a lightweight French terry yarn, so is much thinner than a traditional winter hoodie. It also has a much shorter hem, so reaches down to your hip bone rather than over your bum. Its traditional kangaroo pouch and oversized hood add a bit more style to the top and it washes up well. Phew!



UNDERARMOUR Rush SmartForm Perforated Ankle Leggings

£89 / XS-XL / underarmour.co.uk
Tester Holly

This is a great pair of leggings, particularly for workouts. I struggled with the waistband at the back as there was no drawstring and I couldn’t quite get a perfect fit around the waist so they slipped slightly when I ran. That being said, they wick moisture well, have a lovely stretch to them and the perforated panels help with ventilation. You can never go wrong with a roomy thigh pocket in my opinion, either.



ESSENTIAL UNDERWEAR

We test runners' pants for comfort, style, VPL, chafe and leakage protection



LACUNA Sports Leakproof Pants

£19.95 / lacunasports.co.uk
Tester *Laura M*

Lacuna Sports offers these bikini-style leakproof pants as part of their women's cricket collection, but they are an option for runners too. Made from 93% bamboo, they are super soft to the touch, odour-fighting and breathable. They can absorb up to 40ml of liquid, and are great for coping with moderate period flow and protection from leaks and sweat. I tested them out on a long run and felt secure and comfortable and they didn't feel bulky at all. Lacuna says they are designed to be a snug fit, but I went a size up for a bit more coverage. I did feel a little self-conscious about VPL in my running tights to be honest and I would have preferred a seam-free option.



PUMAX MODIBODI Active Brief

£21.50 / modibodi.co.uk
Tester *Laura F*

These pants are designed for light to moderately heavy periods, leakage and discharge up to 10ml (roughly 1-2 tampons). They're comfortable to wear and the padding in the gusset doesn't feel at all bulky. In fact, wearing them under leggings it wasn't obvious that I was wearing anything other than a pair of pants and there's no rustling noise. The outer is made from recycled polyester and spandex while the gusset is made from Merino wool and polyester. They gave me confidence while I was running.



RUNDERWEAR Briefs

£18 / runderwear.co.uk
Tester *Tina*

My butt cheeks have obviously got bigger as my usual Runderwear hipsters seem to be riding up a little. These much fuller, and higher pants, give you more security and coverage, and are great for those who put run comfort over sex appeal (who doesn't?!). It seems to go without saying that all Runderwear underwear is chafe-free, and absorbs sweat well, so these are your choice if you want a higher waist on your pant and a lower cut around the cheek. And they're made from 92% recycled fabric.



STEPONE Bikini Brief

£13 / uk.stepone.life
Tester *Emma*

These arrived in cute little compostable bags, but on first sight I thought the bikini brief was not going to be the right style for me. Where was I going to tuck my tummy? However, they slipped on easily and didn't budge under my running leggings. I found no problem with the fit and the style on my morning run. The elastic waistband is just the right size for a comfortable fit. It was soft and flexible enough to accommodate all my movements. The pant material feels cool and smooth against your skin and the neat little seams around the leg holes were unobtrusive and didn't roll or bunch up under my leggings. The two colours I tried – black and pale pink – were the only colours I would want but there are other options for the more adventurous. A surprising full marks!





ESSENTIAL SOCKS

No more blisters, sisters...



CEP Run No Show Socks

£14.95 / cepsports.co.uk / Tester Esther

I have to tell you why these are five stars straightaway: that white detailing means you can clearly see the L and R no matter how rubbish your eyesight is (ahem). If you've ever bought a pair of running socks where this crucial distinction becomes less distinct with every wash, then OMG, these are the socks for you. I love the compressive fit, the fabric is soft and doesn't rub, my arches are fully supported in the mid-to-thin material – in all, they're a fantastic all-rounder, of which I wish I had 17 pairs so I could wear them all the time. Cor, who'd a thought I'd get this excited about socks?



DARN TOUGH No Show Tab Ultra Lightweight

£19.95 / amazon.co.uk / Tester Rachel F

Both soft and super comfortable, these are slightly shorter than I would usually wear, as they hardly show above my trainers, and I was worried they might rub around the top of my shoes. However, they stayed in place perfectly and caused no blisters or irritation and did not pinch around the ankles. My feet stayed dry while running and the sock felt very natural – like a second skin. They felt exactly the same after washing too, so I am hoping they will last the distance! Great socks.



HJHALL Trainer Socks

£9.50 / hj.co.uk / Tester Geri

I am a big fan of bamboo socks but always a little sceptical when it comes to bamboo trainer socks, as I hate it when socks get eaten by your trainers mid run. These socks have an excellent fit and feel great on. They instantly felt comfortable and stayed in place while I was running. They are breathable and the bamboo adds antibacterial properties, very welcome for anyone who works out a lot. They washed well and so far are still looking like they are brand new even though I've worn them a lot. They come in a pack of two colours – black and white – and aren't too expensive. A strong option for fresh feet and comfort.



SMARTWOOL Run Targeted Cushion Mid Crew Socks

£22.99 / smartwool.co.uk
Tester Sarah

Despite having quite large feet, I do still like a ladies-fit sock, which these are. They fit nicely and don't suffer from baggy toes and too much material in annoying places. They have a Merino wool blend, which helps regulate the body temperature, mesh panels for extra ventilation and they're odour resistant. The targeted cushioning is in the heel and the ball of the foot. On top of the ever-so-important technical features, they also look funky. I do like a mid-crew length as it protects against splashes and brambles. I have worn and washed these a lot, and they still offer that new-sock feel. The price is to be considered, but they will last so you could happily call these an investment item.



Long-distance TEST

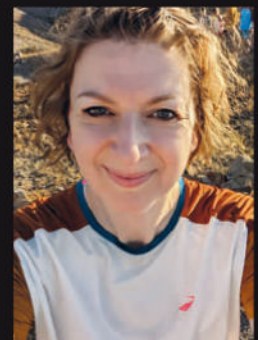
Esther has been prepping for her next ultra in this bold and stylish range from Brooks



BROOKS High Point Trail range

From £16
brooksrunning.com

Now the weather has warmed up, I keep coming back to this trail range from Brooks – and I know this will sound weird, but it's because it's clearly been designed by runners. The shorts fit beautifully, and have loads of pockets. The top is, and I can't emphasise this enough, the most perfect length and fit: it's light, the colour blocking is flattering, and it hits just below the hips. The merino socks are excellent on the trails, long enough to evade grit, and soft enough to evade blisters.



ESSENTIAL SHORTS

The holy grail of summer running is finding the perfect pair of shorts. Here are four contenders

DECATHLON Kalenji Run Dry 2in1 Shorts

£19.99 / 4-6 - 14-16 / decathlon.co.uk
Tester *Sabrina*

I went for a few runs in these shorts but am not a massive fan of them for a few reasons. The first problem is the waist ties you have to use to keep the shorts up. Although I have large thighs and hips, I have a small waist, so I had to pull the waist ties in really tight – which caused the material to gather – in order to get them to stay up. Due to this, or maybe it's a design fault, the under-shorts did not stay mid-thigh and, instead, became hotpants. This was not good for my upper inside thigh chafing, or my running form, as I had to keep stopping to pull them back down. A plus point is the small back zipped pocket that allowed me to store my car key.



JANJI AFO Middle Shorts

£50 / XS-XL / uk.janji.com / Tester *Rachel F*

These shorts are lovely, light and airy in a gorgeous bright blue colour. They have a comfortable drawstring at the waist to adjust the fit and hold the shorts securely in place when running. They don't rub around the waist or leg areas and the inner liner wicks sweat away very effectively. They have a decent-sized zipped pocket at the back, perfect for cards/keys. These shorts tick all the boxes and are spot-on for running in warmer weather.



ON Movement Tights Short

£85 / XS-XL / on-running.com
Tester *Rachel F*

If you are going to buy one pair of short/biker-length leggings, then these are a MUST! The sizing is spot on, and they are incredibly comfortable as well as being breathable. They are high waisted and stay in place perfectly. The leg doesn't ride up at all when running. The material is soft with no rubbing or pinching anywhere and there are also some discreet and useful pockets on the leg and in the waistband. The only slight drawback is that sweat doesn't always wick away quickly around the waistband, and that price is quite ouchy for a pair of shorts. Nevertheless, these short tights are still the best I've worn, and the quality means I should be able to wear them for years. Great purchase!



VUORI Studio Pocket Short

£70 / XXS-XXL
vuoriclothing.co.uk
Tester *Sarah*

Vuori is a Californian premium performance brand, which is proud of its climate-neutral status and is striving to grow its business sustainably. These shorts are so soft to the touch, they feel amazing on and fit as expected. They have a 5" inseam, are high-waisted and have two panel pockets and a waistband pocket. There are no creaky zips or seams or panels to irritate. I have worn them for various runs, as well as on holiday and love the fit and feel of them. They offer full coverage, no transparency and stay in place throughout a run. And they have four-way stretch, are moisture wicking and are 72% polyester. I love the pockets and I think the shorts have a general slimming effect! (I'm a large). The reason for not giving top marks is the price; admittedly, this is a premium product but for me the price is a bit too high.





ESSENTIAL CAPRIS

Oh go on, show a bit of lower leg... it's summer!



DHB Tech Run Capri

£28 / 8-18 / wiggle.co.uk
Tester *Laura*

You will be sold on these running tights as soon as you slip your legs in. The first impression is definitely high quality. The fabric is thick enough for you to be confident that, whether you're squatting on your warm-up or crossing the finish line of a race, no-one will see anything you don't want them to. All this and you still get great breathability too. The stylish mesh panels behind the knees are effective and the pocket on the leg is large enough to carry a phone. The reflective detail and drawstring waist work well too.



KOKO+KIND Capris

£35.95 / XS-XXL / kokoandkind.com
Tester *Laura F*

I was really impressed with these capris; they fit well, feel great and also look amazing. I tested the Blush Leopard print which was an adventurous step away from plain black, but they are still subtle enough to suit my preferences – and if you prefer something bolder, there are lots of other prints to choose from. The fabric felt soft against my skin and it was nicely breathable on the run. Advice from koko+kind is to size up, which was true of my pair, and I found they were very comfortable and didn't budge while I was running. Since I tested these, I haven't worn anything else, so it's top marks from me.



PELETON Essential Capri

£74 / XS-2X / apparel.onepeleton.co.uk
Tester *Emma*

These get a perfect 5 out of 5! I love their length and they are super comfortable, flattering and versatile for all activities.

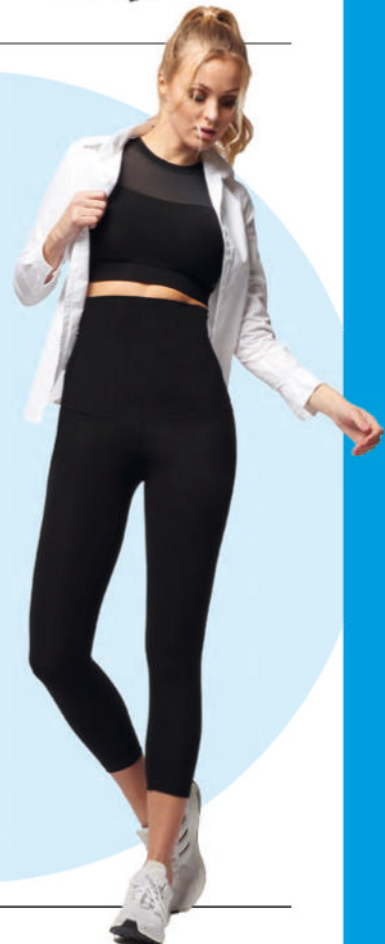
The fit is spot on, and the material is lovely and soft, yet also wicks away moisture when exercising. The waist band is quite wide and high which maximises comfort and the internal draw cord keeps them nicely in place. There is no chafing or rubbing around legs or waist and there is a useful, yet discreet, internal pocket at the back. These leggings are great for both high-intensity workouts and relaxing around the house.



TLC Extra Strong Compression Cropped Leggings with High Waisted Tummy Control

£44 / XS-4X / tlcspport.co.uk / Tester *Geri*

These TLC leggings take compression to a whole new level. Classic in style, they're plain black with no extra frills, but they do come with high waisted tummy control. They're made from very comfortable fabric and are a good choice if you are looking for more support from your leggings. They didn't budge an inch while I ran and felt secure. The compression for me was a massive plus, giving just the right amount of compression for my tired legs. They're also good value for money for the quality you get; it's just a shame they don't come in different colours, and a pocket or two would have been nice.



ESSENTIAL HEADPHONES

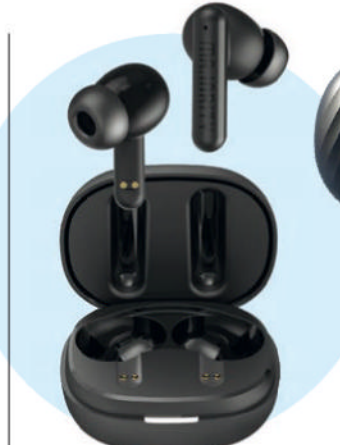
Whether you like podcasts, audio books, music or telephone calls, it's important to get the right ear worms when running



CREATIVE Outlier Free Pro

£159.99 / uk.creative.com
Tester **Rachel I**

I've been wearing Shokz for years and have never strayed so I was intrigued to see what these offer. On first looks, they are very similar although these are rubberised and definitely a bit lighter than my old Shokz. The battery life is also better on these; not only the 10 hours you get from a full charge but crucially the fact that a 10-minute burst of charging will give you two hours usage. Very useful if you forgot to charge them or if *someone* (no names mentioned) unplugged them to charge their own device. The controls are good and I also liked that you can store 8GB of music on the speakers. I won't use this function a lot as I always take my phone when running but it's great for swimming and other times when you want to ditch the mobile. I didn't like the sound as much as my Shokz; it's quite hard to hear apart from in perfectly quiet locations so I have to have it on maximum all the time. A woman next to me on a plane complained she could hear my podcast just as well as I could. Oops!



MAJORITY Tru 2 ANC Wireless

£49.95 / majority.co.uk
Tester **Lucy**

These waterproof, wireless earbuds are extremely good value and come with three different silicone buds so you can find your most comfortable fit, and ensure they stay put. I found they were easy to pair with my mobile via Bluetooth, and they can be quickly charged in their sleek case for 30 hours playback, which is pretty good going – plus you can fast charge them for 30 minutes, which will give you two hours' worth of playback, which is super useful for those of us who always forget until the last minute! I was impressed with the sound quality, particularly when listening to music, and the microphone worked well for calls. The downsides are the noise cancellation wasn't quite as good as I have experienced with other earbuds, and the touch operation wasn't always responsive enough. I tend to prefer earbuds that have an over-ear anchor as well, just to make sure they stay in place during sweaty runs, so I was concerned about the staying power of these. That said, they did stay put on short runs!



ONE OUDIO OpenRock Pro Open Ear Conduction Sport Earbuds

£116 / oneodio.com
Tester **Tina**

Whether it's my tiny ears, or the fact I sweat a lot, I find that no open ear bud ever stays in all the time. I never want to have to stop during a marathon to pick up an ear bud, again, ever. And happily these buds won't be the ones to aggravate me, as the design of these means they can't/won't fall off – which is figuratively and literally music to my (tiny) ears. They're also surprisingly light and don't pinch or put pressure on your ears. The ear hook is adjustable too, so that helps. Sitting outside the ear, you get ambient noise, which I really like to have on runs because of safety issues, but if you want to focus on the beat (or the Women's Running Podcast), you have to turn these up pretty high. With 46 hours on the battery, they last an impressively long time between charges, too. I just wish they were fully water resistant as I would love to wear them while swimming. Note to One Odio for the next version, perhaps?



3 of the best apps

Technology can make fitness more affordable and accessible too

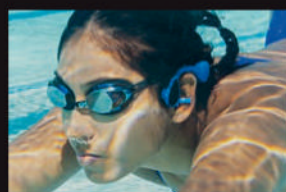
BIRDA

Birda is a birdwatching app. You can identify and log the birds around you, as well as share and follow what wildlife your friends are finding. Its ever-growing species guide offers thousands of bird references, and it helps you find top birding locations anywhere on the globe. birda.org



ROBYN DRUMMOND FITNESS

A wellbeing app for women, RDF offers a combination of fitness, nutrition and psychological support. The app contains hundreds of pre-recorded workouts, nutritional guides, quick and unfussy recipes and videos. £14.99 per month, robyndrummondfitness.com



ZYGO

A new swim coaching app and headset, this enables real-time, underwater coaching capabilities. Once paired with the bone conduction headset, a transmitter streams audio from a phone \$299 from shopzygo.com; coaching from brownleefitness.com



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HOW TO RUN GREENER

Sometimes it's hard to see the wood for the trees when it comes to doing our bit for the environment, but the running community has huge potential when it comes to positive and sustainable change...

Words **Kelly Lucas**

“I think a while ago, when you'd see headlines about polar bears and the weather, it all seemed very far away. You were aware of a global crisis, but it didn't seem to affect us directly. Then I started to realise that running was part of the problem...”

Record-breaking ultra-runner Damian Hall is reflecting back on the past 12 months since co-founding The Green Runners, a community he hopes will inspire fellow runners to start

making personal changes to help the environment. “I started to analyse my own behaviour and ask, what can we do about this within running?” he says.

On the face of it, running should be an environmentally friendly sport. The action itself is carbon neutral and, in principle, you can run from your front door with a minimal amount of equipment. In addition, we think of runners as being fit, making healthy food choices, and being conscious of the great outdoors because we use it for the sport we love. »

The Green Runners community sets out the things we can all do to make running greener. So there's no excuse for sitting around feeling helpless any longer



» Despite the wholesome, healthy view we have of running, the unfortunate reality is that it's not as green and sustainable as we may think. And while it's easy to overlook the problems, most would agree that we have a responsibility to make positive changes for the environment and future generations.

How big an issue is this?

- **Travel** For many runners, travel to events is seen as the most obvious contributor to their carbon footprint. This includes anything from driving to your local parkrun, spending a few hours in the car to get to a race further afield, and flying both domestically and internationally. With the number of races increasing exponentially and the rise in popularity of the 'bucket list' race, many of us are travelling lengthy distances to cross the start line of an event.

For example, a 2021 study looking at the carbon footprint of marathon runners showed that 37% of New York Marathon participants had travelled internationally to the city. An alarming amount when you consider that one person's transatlantic flight to New York creates around to 3.5 tons CO₂, which is equivalent to 83% of the annual carbon footprint of an average French citizen.

Even the seemingly innocuous parkrun has become problematic, with parkrun tourism – where runners travel vast distances just to tick a location off their list – contributing to an increase in travel.

- **Kit/clothing** While travel is perhaps a more obvious 'environmental baddie', the production of running clothing and equipment is also a huge issue for the environment. According to the World Economic Forum, the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of humanity's carbon emissions – that's more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined – and is the second-largest consumer of the world's water supply.

There's no doubt that the environmental impact of making even one item of clothing is huge. According to British company, Trees not Tees: "It takes the same amount of water that a person drinks in 2.5 years to make a single cotton t-shirt, plus over 2kg of eCO₂. If it's never even worn, all of those precious resources were spent for nothing."

According to a Massachusetts Institute of Technology study, one pair of running shoes

generates 14kg of carbon emissions during its life cycle, with the production alone equalling the emissions of a 100-watt light bulb kept on for a week.

What's worse, a significant amount of running clothing is made of synthetic materials, which can take up to 200 years to decompose. And a 2017 report from the International Union of Conservation of Nature estimated that 35% of all microplastics – very small pieces of plastic that never biodegrade – in the ocean came from the laundering of textiles like polyester.

- **Over-consumption** In addition to the carbon footprint of manufacturing, runners also need to be aware of over-consumption. According to the UK Government Environmental Audit Committee, we buy more clothes per person in the UK than any other country in Europe.

Around 300,000 tonnes of textile waste ends up in household black bins every year, sent to landfill or incinerators.

Less than 1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing at the end of its life. And globally, the equivalent of one garbage truck full of clothes is burned or dumped in landfill every second. In total, 85% of textiles go into landfills each year.

So how can we become more green?

It was over-consumption specifically that brought the issue to a head for Damian Hall (pictured above left). Hall's first stop was a conversation with the co-founders of ReRun clothing, Dan Lawson and his wife Charlotte Jalley. "They sort of sounded the alarm in the running world and made us realise that our kit was a big part of the problem both in terms of production and waste..."

"I started questioning myself as an athlete who would fly maybe three times a year and promote new kit on Instagram and came to realise that I was part of the problem." That, alongside the COP26 summit in Glasgow, saw Hall put together a new community, The Green Runners, alongside ultra-runners Jasmin Paris and Dan Lawson.

The Green Runners launched in February 2022 with four fundamental pillars they say need to be addressed to limit running's environmental impact; how you move, how you kit up, how you eat and how you speak up. Upon joining, they ask members to make a pledge for a nominal fee of £2.50 within at least one of the pillars. »





// Globally, the
equivalent of one
garbage truck full of
clothes is burned or
dumped in landfill
every second //

// It's about reducing the amount of travel that you're doing, reducing the number of races, choosing a key race to focus on, using public transport to get to races wherever possible and trying to car share //

» How you move

For Paris (pictured below), a record-breaking ultra-runner who's won the winter Spine Race and set fastest known times for the Bob Graham Round and the Ramsay Round, thinking about how she travels to races has been the biggest change. "It's about reducing the amount of travel that you're doing, reducing the number of races, choosing a key race to focus on, using public transport to get to races wherever possible and trying to car share."

She also suggests trying to find solutions if it's not immediately obvious how you can travel sustainably. "Ask the race organisers to change the start time of a race, so that you can get there by train or ask them to put on a mini bus shuttle from the train station, that sort of thing," she advises.

Paris pledged to limit flying when she joined The Green Runners, and has committed to flying internationally to just one event per year. Last year, she travelled to the UTMB in France by public transport and documented her journey for The Green Runners. "This doesn't come entirely naturally to me. I'd be quite happy just to go there without any attention whatsoever and be the dark horse and just run and enjoy the race. Then if it went really well, or it didn't go well, nobody would pay any attention. That's the way I'd like it. But I don't feel like I have a choice, this is something I can do, so I should do it. For the sake of the planet, for the future, my children and everybody else's."

This year, she flew to just one race, the iconic Barkley Marathons in Tennessee, becoming only the second women in history to start on the fourth loop of the event.

How you kit up

Hall says he's often asked which brands are sustainable and who we should be buying from, but he thinks that isn't actually the answer. "We should be buying less and making it last," he says. He also calls on brands to stop making so many products that aren't actually any different to a previous iteration, just a different colour.



Both Hall and Paris are keen to promote reusing and repairing older kit and urge runners to consider kit swaps and jumble sales.

When the time comes to buy a new product, try and find sustainable brands and clothing. Matt Thomas from sustainable clothing brand Dryad says: "The only reason to do something unsustainably is because it is cheaper and you don't care about the negative impacts. It will be cheaper because the product is a poorer quality, it is worse for the environment and everyone who is part of the manufacturing process (predominantly women) will have fewer opportunities as margins will have been squeezed to create an inferior product as cheaply as possible.

"This doesn't just apply to the fabrics, as you can have sustainable fabrics that are manufactured in bad factories and you are only addressing part of the issue. You need to look at your entire value chain, from the textile mill, the dyeing process, shipping, manufacturing ethics and end of life..."

"As Dryad grows, there is still so much more we can do around circularity, repairability, end of life and these are things that need to be shared and developed across the industry. Sustainability shouldn't be seen as a USP, rather as the right thing for everyone to do."

How you eat

The Green Runners encourage plant-based eating, although they're not evangelical about going completely vegan. "I think fuelling is a little bit less significant in running, as we're fuelling all day anyway," says Hall.

"That said, beef and lamb farming are horrendous for the planet, so reducing your consumption of these is a good step." A 2021 study showed the global production of meat causes twice the pollution of growing and processing fruits and vegetables for people to eat.

"Damian is much better than me, he's an all-out vegan," says Paris. "We don't really eat any red meat at home but the main change I've made to my diet is switch dairy milk to oat milk. And I think more about the carbon footprint of what I eat."

BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

The worst you can do is nothing. Here are some tips about where to start

- Be mindful of your carbon footprint and take responsibility for your choices.
- Do training runs from your front door. Look at Strava segments for inspiration or go to englandathletics.org to find your local running club.
- Run local races. Local running clubs often have a calendar of upcoming races.
- Try run commuting. In certain workplaces, you could club together with other staff to ask your employer to install showers and lockers if these aren't currently available.
- Travel sustainably by minimising flying to events, using public transport and car sharing where possible. You could also consider carbon offsetting your flight, although do your research, as there are a myriad different schemes available.
- Check out rome2rio.com for a guide on how to travel via public transport across Europe.
- If you do have a bucket list race abroad that you have to fly to, make the most of the experience. Spend money in the local economy and travel on public transport in the local area.
- Ask race directors to use start and finish locations that are accessible by public transport or to offer incentives for runners to car share. Some established races have active communities on Facebook and this can be a good place to ask about lift sharing to a race.
- Wear your current kit for as long as possible and look after it. When needed, repair your kit (see our recommendations for repairers over the page).
- Wash your kit less or on a shorter cycle and air dry – running clothes are notorious for shedding micro plastics.
- Get rid of shoes when the grip goes, not just because they've done a prescribed amount of mileage.
- Dispose of old kit correctly. Upcycling it into something else will make the biggest difference.
- Buy secondhand when you can (for example Vinted), swap kit or host a sports kit jumble sale.
- When you do buy new kit, choose high quality, sustainably made products.
- Check the environmental and sustainability credentials of sportswear suppliers before purchasing. There is currently no single scheme accrediting the carbon footprint of brands and products but look for labels with the following: B Corporation, Cruelty Free International, ECOCERT, Fairtrade, GoodWeave, GOTS (Global Organic Textiles Standard), GRS (Global Recycled Standard), Living Wage, OEKO-TEX, OCS (Organic Content Standard), REACH Standard
- Eat a wholefood plant-based diet as much as possible, limiting the consumption of red meat and dairy.
- Use reusable water bottles or flasks.
- Buy gel jugs and reusable flasks rather than disposable single-use gels.
- Take your own homemade snacks on runs.
- Limit plastic packaging by consuming dates or similar dried fruits on runs as fuel.
- Pick up your rubbish.
- Communicate with race directors and encourage them to minimise post-run swag such as plastic bags, medals, t-shirts and packaged food.

Runners love the outdoors and it's up to us to call out bad behaviour when we see it



// I think people want to be sustainable... but I do think it's hard for consumers to make the correct decisions with so much conflicting information, labelling and greenwashing out there //

» How you speak up

Speaking up is perhaps the pillar both Hall and Paris are most keen to highlight. “Speaking out and trying to affect ‘big’ change is the most important thing we can do, but it’s also important to make those smaller changes”, says Hall.

“I feel like I’ve got a platform and I feel some responsibility to try and do what I can to use that for the positive,” says Paris. “I’m acutely aware that I’m in a fairly privileged position to be able to make these decisions, like travelling by public transport which may be more expensive than flying, and you know the cost of oat milk, compared with dairy milk is significantly more.

“So I understand the situation will be slightly different in terms of what we’re all able to do. But I think once you start trying to make some changes, it becomes a positive cycle and encourages more change and spreading the word. So speaking out is critically the most important thing,” she says.

Matt Thomas from Dryad adds: “Greenwashing is another big problem; there’s currently very little legislation around what brands can and can’t say and that makes it hard for customers to make properly informed decisions.”

So can running be green?

It’s a big question, but there’s hope. In recent years, the conversation about how to improve the carbon footprint of running has come to a head, and that’s undoubtedly down in part to athletes with influence raising awareness of the issues.

Also, runners are inherently interested in the environment. Matt Thomas agrees: “I would say that people who exercise outdoors tend to do so because they love being outside. You get a sense of the changes in the seasons and environment and it’s becoming increasingly clear that our climate is changing. I think people want to be sustainable... but I do think it’s hard for consumers to make the correct decisions with so much conflicting information, labelling and greenwashing out there. Also, by their nature sustainable products are more expensive and this is also a barrier.”

Making good choices when it comes to travel, clothing, equipment and food are all positive steps. But perhaps the biggest takeaway is the need to speak up. “We can all do better as consumers but we can’t do everything. Try and push for change,” says Hall. “The two big areas are the sportswear industry and big events, and they’re the ones that usually can improve significantly, and make much bigger progress than individuals.”

Paris agrees, saying: “Nobody is perfect. Just by being alive we have a carbon footprint. We’re just trying to inform people and empower them to try and think about what they’re doing, and also what they could change.” 🌱

CHANGE MAKERS

The people who can help you to make a big difference

THE GREEN RUNNERS

A collective of like-minded runners who care about their carbon footprint and make choices to make it greener. The group officially launched in February 2022 and focuses on four pillars; how we move, how we kit up, how we eat and how we speak up. thegreenrunners.com

TREES NOT TEES

They work with event organisers to give participants the option of planting a tree rather than receiving a race t-shirt. treesnottees.com

RERUN CLOTHING

ReRun Clothing was set up by professional athlete Dan Lawson and his wife Charlotte Jalley in 2018 after Dan struggled to find an environmentally friendly clothing sponsor. They’ve recently closed their service reusing unwanted running clothing but continue to champion pre-loved clothing and have partnered with a number of new initiatives. facebook.com/rerunclothing

TERRACYCLE

Terracycle is a global recycling company specialising in recycling typically hard-to-recycle waste. Consumers can take their waste to drop-off locations or send it in for free to be recycled. terracycle.com/en-GB

RUBBISH SHOES

Rubbish Shoes make ‘Frankensteinesque’ trainers out of material from discarded shoes in an effort to divert old running shoes from landfill. rubbishshoes.com

GOOD ON YOU

Good On You is a guide to sustainable clothing brands. goodonyou.eco

3RD ROCK

A sustainable climbing brand with some running apparel available. 3rdrockclothing.com

ALLBIRDS

Sustainable footwear. allbirds.co.uk

BAM

Sustainable bamboo clothing. bambooclothing.co.uk

DRYAD

A sportswear company based in Wales that uses sustainable and repairable fabrics. dryad.co

JANJI

Sustainable running clothing. uk.janji.com

SUNDRIED

Sundried produces predominantly triathlon clothing with an eco-friendly twist. sundried.com

FIXER UPPERS

Repair specialists in the UK who will repair any brand:

- snowdoniagearrepair.co.uk
- sheffieldclothingrepair.com
- lancshiresportsrepairs.co.uk
- circularinc.co.uk/repair

WORKOUT

Leg workout for runners

Leg exercises are worth their weight in gold when it comes to strong running

Workout created by Anne-Marie Lategan

Leg strength contributes to improving the efficiency of your running mechanics and the economy of your movement. This is because, when your leg muscles are strong, they can produce force more efficiently, reducing wasted energy and promoting a smoother running stride. This improved running economy will enable you to maintain a desired pace for longer periods without excessive fatigue.

► Warm-up

Stand on one leg and swing your leg 10 times forwards and backwards and 10 times from side to side. Walk on the spot with your eyes closed. This will help your nerve system to become more alert.

► Sets & reps

Add these exercises to your weekly routine and do two sets of 15 repetitions.

► Cooldown

Complete the workout and then do a full body stretch. Hold each position for 60 seconds to help improve your flexibility.

GO PRO!

Increase to three sets of 20 repetitions. Holding on to a weight and increasing load will also increase the intensity of the exercises.

// Weighted walking lunges

AREAS TRAINED

Front thigh, back thigh, bottom (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes).

WHY DO IT?

Lunges require a good range of motion in the hip flexors, which can become tight and shortened from repetitive running. By doing these, you'll stretch and strengthen muscles, enhancing flexibility and reducing the risk of imbalance or strain.

TECHNIQUE

- Stand with your legs hip width apart and hold a weight in each hand.
- Step forward with your left leg and bend both knees
- Push off and step forward with your right leg
- Alternate between left and right

BE SAFE

Keep your back straight and look forward.



// Bench single leg squat

AREAS TRAINED

Front thigh, back thigh, bottom (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes).

WHY DO IT?

Single-leg squats mimic the movement patterns used during running, making them a functional exercise that will improve your running strength.

TECHNIQUE

- Sit on a bench or a chair
- Keep your left foot flat on the floor
- Extend your right leg out in front of you
- Stand up without using your right leg
- Complete one set before changing over to the other side

BE SAFE

Keep your core muscles tight to aid your balance.



// Resistance band standing glute extensions

AREAS TRAINED
Bottom (glutes).

WHY DO IT?

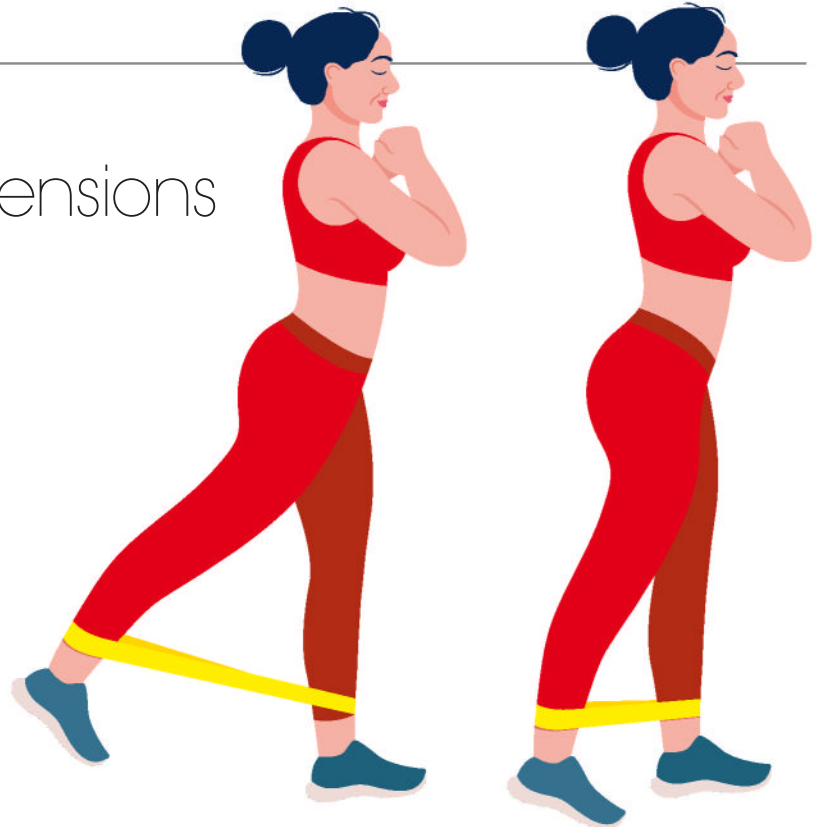
Your glute muscles play an important role in providing power and stability to the hips and pelvis. Strong glutes can enhance your running performance, improve your stride efficiency and reduce the risk of injuries.

TECHNIQUE

- Tie a resistance band around your ankles
- Place all your body weight on your left leg
- Extend your right leg backwards

BE SAFE

Keep strong, slow and controlled. Don't swing your legs like in the warm-up.



// Strong glutes can enhance your running performance, improve your stride efficiency and reduce the risk of injuries //

// Stability ball plank glute lift {advanced}

AREAS TRAINED

Stomach and back muscles, bottom, proprioception (rectus abdominus, transverses abdominus, erector spinae, glutes).

WHY DO IT?

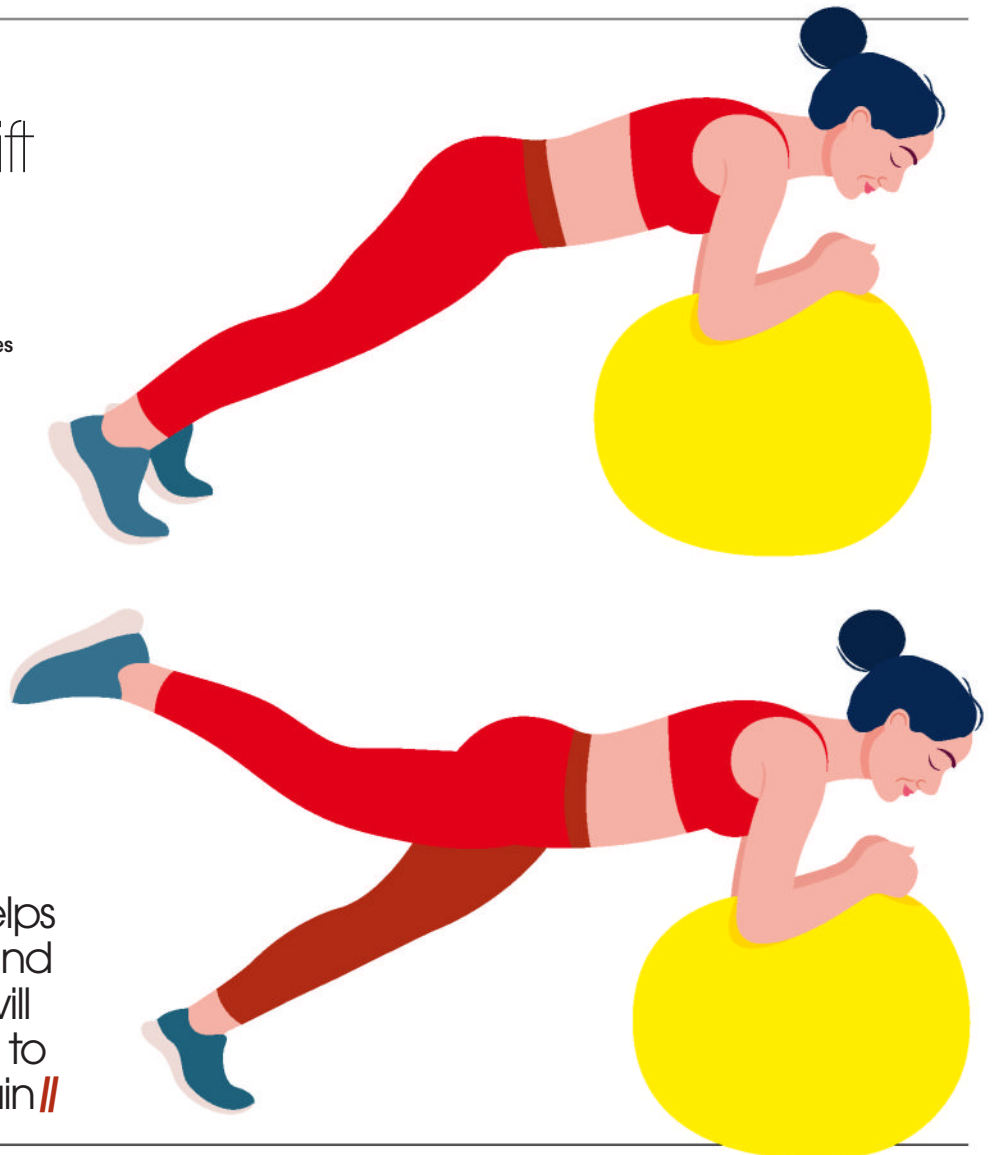
This exercise requires a high level of proprioception, which can help improve balance and coordination. It will improve your ability to run on uneven terrain.

TECHNIQUE

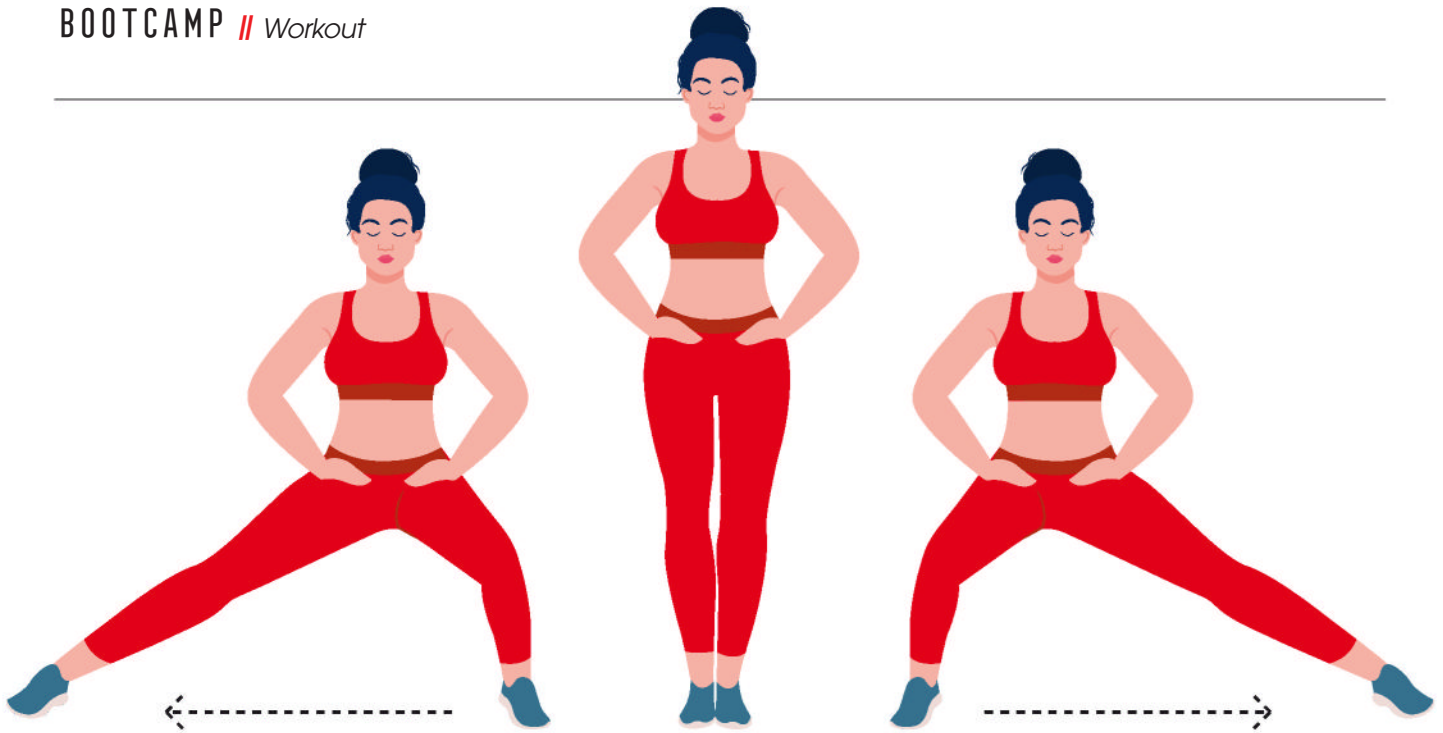
- Place your elbows and forearms on a stability ball
- Keep a straight line between your head, shoulders and hips
- Slowly lift your right leg off the floor
- Hold the top position for three seconds
- Place your foot back on the floor
- Repeat on the other side

BE SAFE

If you struggle with balance, place the ball against a wall.



// Proprioception helps improve balance and coordination and will improve your ability to run on uneven terrain //



// Lateral leg slide

// This exercise helps to improve your balance and lateral strength //

AREAS TRAINED
Inner thighs and outer thighs (adductors, abductors).

WHY DO IT?
Running is a predominantly forward-motion activity and many runners neglect the lateral movement patterns. This exercise targets the muscles responsible for moving your legs sideways, and helps to improve your balance and lateral strength.

TECHNIQUE

- Stand with your feet together
- Bend your left leg and slide your right leg out to the side
- Return to the starting position
- Repeat the movement on the other side
- Alternate between left and right

BE SAFE

Keep your back straight and only bend your knee as much as you feel comfortable.



// Weighted squats

AREAS TRAINED
Front thigh, back thigh, bottom (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes).

WHY DO IT?
Loading your squats develops greater lower body strength and power.

TECHNIQUE

- Stand with your feet slightly wider than hip width apart

- Turn your toes out to 45 degrees
- Hold a weight with both hands in front of your chest
- Bend both your knees

BE SAFE

Only bend as far down as feels comfortable for your knees.

// Loading your squats develops greater lower body strength and power //

// Pivoting

AREAS TRAINED

Back thigh, hip flexors, bottom, balance (hamstrings, psoas muscles, glutes).

WHY DO IT?

By training your body to maintain balance and control during dynamic movements, you reduce the risk of ankle sprains, knee injuries, and falls while running.

TECHNIQUE

- Stand on your right leg
- Bend forward from your waist
- Extend your left leg backwards and reach your hands towards the floor
- Return to the standing position but don't put your left foot on the floor
- Complete one set before changing over to the other side

BE SAFE

Don't over stretch the back of your leg.



// Training your body to maintain balance and control during dynamic movements reduces the risk of injury when running //

// Stronger glutes can help you generate more force during each stride. This will lead to increased speed and power output //

// Bridge

AREAS TRAINED

Back thigh, bottom (hamstrings, glutes).

WHY DO IT?

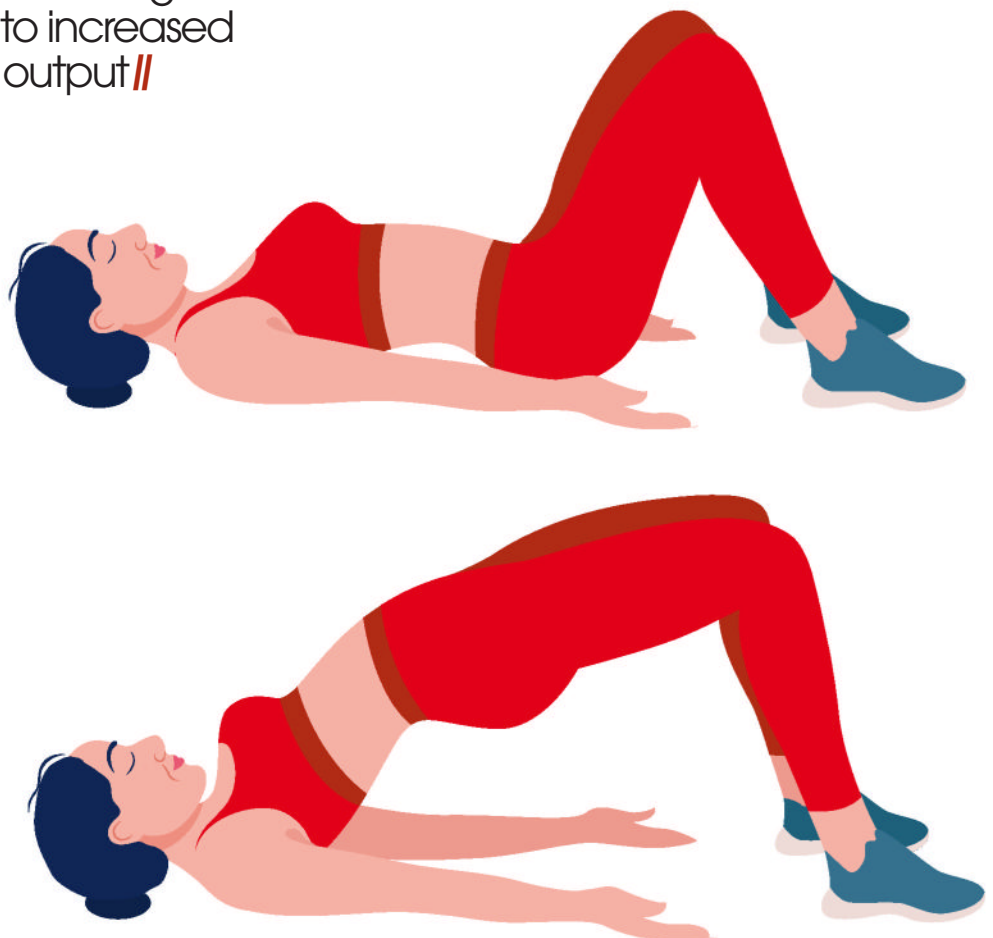
Stronger glutes can help you generate more force during each stride. This will lead to increased speed and power output.

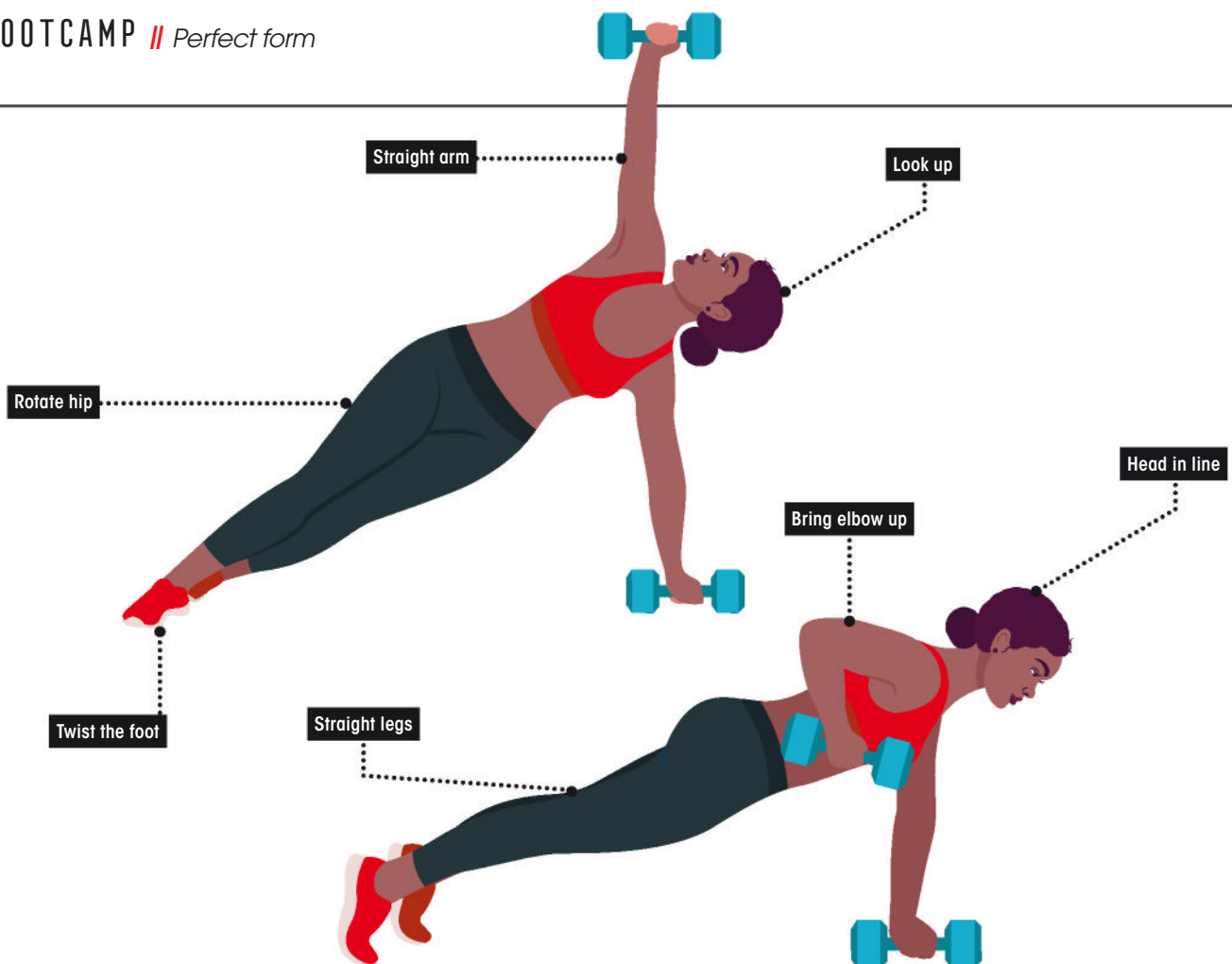
TECHNIQUE

- Lie on the floor with your legs bent and your feet flat on the floor
- Keep your arms next to your body
- Lift your hips off the floor until you form a straight line between your knees, hips and shoulders
- Hold the top position for three counts
- Lower to the floor but don't rest on the floor

BE SAFE

Work within a comfortable range of motion.





Perfect form

Plank row and rotation

Doing this pose during work breaks will help loosen your hips

Plank row and rotation targets your upper body, core and back muscles. It's a dynamic movement that stabilises your torso and challenges all the muscles in your body. By incorporating plank row and rotation exercises into your training you can improve your core stability, balance and strength.

Why should runners do it?

This is a powerful exercise that provides multiple benefits by strengthening your core, stabilising your spine and reducing the risk of injuries while running. This multi-dimensional movement is essential for maintaining proper running form and improving

your posture and technique. By engaging your entire body in a functional way, this exercise helps you build strength that translates into better performance on the road or the trail.

Most common mistakes

Often, runners try to do this movement too quickly. Too much momentum in the muscles reduces the amount of strength you build in your muscles, but by focusing on doing slow controlled movements, you will get stronger more quickly.

A second mistake is not keeping a straight back position when you do the pose. Sagging in your spine will cause pain in your lower back and lifting your hips up too high will increase the pressure on your shoulders.

Both incorrect spinal positions will reduce the efficiency of the rotation and will also increase your risk of hurting your shoulders. Form is key with this one.

Technique

- Come into a straight arm plank position, holding a weight in each hand.
- Ensure that your head, shoulders, hips and feet are in a straight line.
- Pull your right arm up bringing the weight up to your armpit and squeeze your shoulder blades.
- Hold the position for two counts.
- Extend your right arm up to the ceiling while simultaneously rotating your hip up towards the ceiling.
- Hold the position for two counts. 🔄

// It's a dynamic movement that stabilises your torso and challenges all the muscles in your body //

STAY SAFE TIP

If you feel any pain in your back, lift your hips slightly higher.

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COULD YOU BE ADDICTED TO EXERCISE?

Sports psychologist Dr Josephine Perry explains the signs and symptoms of exercise addiction, as well as how to tackle the issue head on...

Search #RunningAddict on Instagram and you will find over a million posts. Get a medal from a big run company and you might find Run Addiction brazenly printed on the ribbon. Both things suggest that an addiction to running is something to be proud of; a flippant humblebrag that shows just how dedicated you are. As a sport psychologist, I do not share this 'badge of honour' perspective. Running addiction is a compulsion that can cause real harm, most often prompting disordered eating, overtraining injuries and relationship breakdowns.

Addiction feels like a very harmful, shaming word for something that starts out so positively. For most of us, running is brilliant; it provides physical, mental, cognitive and social benefits that help us thrive. The problem comes when running

turns into an obsessive and unhealthy preoccupation; not that hard to imagine when we have a running culture that reveres those who are dedicated and determined, personality traits that make us susceptible, tons of tech to 'help' us compare ourselves to others, and results that initially improve.

It is the conflict sign which is key. You might well feel like a runner, have lots of friends in your running club, stick fairly rigidly to a training plan and increase your distances because you have entered a marathon. If all of these things are causing no harm, you wouldn't class it as an addiction.

But, if you already have a full diary, caring responsibilities, susceptibility to injury and find you are putting running ahead of everything else to the point where you are falling out with others, then you have fallen into the addicted arena. »



// If you are putting
running ahead of
everything else to the
point where you are
falling out with others,
you have fallen into the
addicted arena //



// With primary exercise addiction, the goal would not be to prevent you from exercising at all, but to help you increase your self-awareness of the addictive behaviour //

WHO IS AT RISK OF EXERCISE ADDICTION?

In the general public, exercise addiction rates are very low at around 0.5%. Those working or interacting regularly in an exercise environment, such as sports science students, have been found to have a risk of addiction between 7% and 15%. Those competing in endurance sports have much higher risk levels found to be around 20% in triathletes, 27% in runners and up to 45% in ultra-endurance athletes.

The nature of the exercise itself may play some part in the addiction. For example, the longer the race distance the higher the risk of addiction. When distance runners were researched, it was their levels of competitiveness which differentiated their risk of exercise addiction with the more competitive runners at highest risk. There are also a number of individual factors that come into play, suggesting the risk gets higher as we age and can be impacted by the environment in which we exercise.

Research also suggests that the more technology we use in our running, the higher the risk. Feeling the need to post runs onto Strava or broadcast what we've achieved on socials can make it feel even more integral to our life, linking our self-esteem and sense of self-worth to our running. This can come crashing down pretty quickly when the inevitable injury occurs.

The final risk factor is having an eating disorder. Those with eating disorders are over 3.5 times more likely to suffer from addiction to exercise. The entwining of exercise addiction with disordered eating is so strong that there are now seen to be two types of exercise addiction: primary (where it is about the running itself) and secondary (where running is a form of calorie purge).

HOW TO MANAGE RUNNING AND EXERCISE ADDICTION

Running addiction is difficult to treat because it is not considered a specific medical disorder, making it harder to diagnose or to have researchers develop treatment protocols. Where someone has an eating disorder first and exercise addiction secondly, treatment will be driven by the eating disorder as this is a more serious condition and running may be completely stopped.

With primary exercise addiction, the goal would not be to prevent you from exercising at all but to help you increase your self-awareness of the addictive behaviour, understand why you run so you can reset goals to match that motivation and then spend time building up tools and tactics to reduce your rigidity around running. A sport psychologist can help you with this process but if that isn't possible right now, there are some steps you can take alone.

Figure out why you run

If you notice that your running is causing you conflict and that you struggle without it, the first step should be



to reflect on why you run so much. What is running giving you? There are a number of common themes:

- Time away from responsibilities
- An opportunity to feel achievement
- A coping mechanism for unpleasant feelings
- A way to handle stress
- Headspace to work through problems

Once you know why, you can proactively investigate other ways to reach the same goal.

Make a performance focussed goal

When addicted to running, you're likely to be doing more than is helpful for high performance. Finding a race or challenge you really want to do well in can help to reset your mindset towards running so you do what is necessary to perform well. This will usually involve cutting down so that you train smartly, not excessively. This is the time to bring in experts too; maybe a coach who can help you stick to planned sessions or a nutritionist who can help you fuel the running you do effectively.

Audit your use of tech

Finally, audit your running tech use. What apps do you use? How much do you engage with other runners online? How much of your 'social' identity is as a runner? If you can build in some tech free runs (to prevent you comparing yourself with others) and hide or mute social media accounts which guilt you to run more, then you can start to build back some balance. 🧘

10 SIGNS OF EXERCISE ADDICTION

Give yourself a mini check-up

- #1 You are increasing your time or intensity – such as adding extra reps or minutes to planned sessions
- #2 You use exercise to improve your mood
- #3 You base your social life around exercise
- #4 Running or other exercise has become a key part of your identity
- #5 Non-fitness activities feel like a nuisance
- #6 You develop meticulous or inflexible behaviours around exercise
- #7 You become frustrated and angry at the thought of missing a session
- #8 You suffer severe withdrawal symptoms if you can't exercise
- #9 You notice that you feel tense, depressed or guilty on days you don't exercise
- #10 Running or other exercise is causing conflict in your wider life – such as repeated injury, relationship issues, interference with study or work and lots of personal inconvenience.





// This is the time to bring in experts; maybe a coach who can help you stick to planned sessions or a nutritionist who can help you fuel the running you do effectively //

THE EXPERTS



Tim Allardyce is a leading physiotherapist and osteopath and has worked at six Olympic Games. He runs Surrey Physio Group surreyphysio.co.uk



Lisa Jackson is a clinical hypnotherapist and the author of *Running Made Easy* and *Your Pace or Mine?* She's run 110 marathons. amhypnotherapy.co.uk



Kelly Lucas is an experienced mountain runner, qualified personal trainer and journalist. Follow her running adventures at hungryrunners.com



Dawn Morse, the founder of Core Elements Training, has an MSc in sport and exercise sciences and teaches sports therapy courses. coreelements.uk.com

SUPPORT NETWORK

Your questions answered

Running after long Covid, the lowdown on K-tape and how to bounce back from a confidence crisis. Plus, is it okay to run every day?

Compiled by: **Lisa Jackson**

Q I'm suffering badly with long Covid: when can I start to run again?

A Long Covid is a complex and poorly understood syndrome that can occur in people after they've contracted Covid-19 and it's estimated that about two million people in the UK have it. I've been working in a long Covid clinic for the NHS in Lewisham, southeast London, for the past three months.

Long Covid does not appear to be related to the severity of the initial Covid-19 infection and the most common symptom is severe fatigue. Many people are finding symptoms very debilitating and reporting that they struggle to do everyday activities such as walking to the shops. Small amounts of activity cause breathlessness and tiredness, sometimes causing people to feel exhausted for several hours to two days afterwards.

One thing we often see in our clinic is that doing more seems to make things worse, so the first advice is to take things slowly. The

length of recovery varies, but I've seen people suffering for months and some for over a year.

There are no obvious quick fixes but the slow-and-steady approach tends to work best. You can start to run again as soon as you can comfortably walk for 30 minutes. Start building up to this with something like a five-minute gentle walk before sitting down and taking a break. Increase that by a few minutes a day until you can walk for 30 minutes. At this point, you'll be ready for a slow jog. Again, start with five minutes a day and increase this by about five minutes with each run. If you feel particularly tired after a run, keep the duration the same or reduce it until you can tolerate it with no side-effects.

The other thing is to maintain a healthy immune system to allow your body to recover. Eat a nutritious balanced diet, avoid processed food and reduce your sugar intake. Avoid fizzy drinks and having too much coffee or tea and instead drink plenty of water. Keep your vitamin D levels up during winter. There's

Q Someone at my running club laughed when I told them I dreamed of doing a marathon and it's destroyed my confidence. Any advice to get back on track?

A Sadly, it's not uncommon for others to pop our party balloons, so try these simple strategies. Firstly, remember that no matter how unfit or slow you are, you don't need anyone's permission to enter a marathon so just go ahead and do it. Secondly, remember that person isn't an expert on you – you're the expert on you, so use that negative comment to spur you on. Repeatedly visualise how good it will feel crossing the finish line with your arms aloft, and also how smug you'll feel when you show your clubmate your medal. This will mean you're rehearsing success – not failure – in your mind, and will help to make your marathon dream a reality. **LJ**



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// Not allowing your body adequate time to rest and repair can lead to overtraining. Overtraining prevents your body from adapting to exercise //

a useful NHS app and website that may help, at yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk. **TA**

Q I workout in the gym as it's not safe to run where I work. How can I make the most of these sessions?

A Try speed intervals on the treadmill. Do a five-minute easy warm-up followed by a 12-minute session in which you alternate sprinting for a minute with slower running for a minute. Finish off with a five-minute easy cooldown.

On another day, crank up the incline and power walk at a pace you can sustain for 20 minutes, remembering to cool down with a five-minute easy walk at the end. Strength training is great for runners, too – focus on doing squats, lunges and core exercises such as the plank and back extension. **KL**



Q I see some runners wearing coloured tape on their muscles. What is it and does it help?

A Kinesiology tape or K-tape first gained popularity at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 and became widely used after that.

Fast forward 30 years and I found myself using K-tape on a cross-country skier at the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. He reported significant therapeutic benefits when applied to his foot.

K-tape is used to help reduce pain and muscle soreness, improve circulation and provide joint support. K-tape does not help improve muscle strength and there is mixed research about its usefulness. It appears that some elite and recreational runners benefit from it although this may be down to the placebo effect. **TA**

Q How can I reduce the impact of running on my joints but still improve my running fitness?

A Running on different terrain such as tarmac, trails, grass and the track, is a great way to get fitter while helping to reduce the impact on your joints.

You could also swap one of your weekly running sessions for a training ride on a road bike or a spell on a cross-trainer. Doing this will support your bodyweight and therefore reduce the impact on your joints while enabling you to exercise your legs in a similar way to running. **DM**

Q Is it okay to run every day?

A Ideally you need at least one or two rest days each week to enable your body to recover from exercise. It's during your rest days that your body recovers from the strain of exercise and this recovery period enables it to repair and adapt to the stresses placed on it during your training.

Not allowing your body adequate time to rest and repair can lead to overtraining. Overtraining prevents your body from adapting to exercise, and during this process you may see your speed decrease, your training runs become more difficult and your resting pulse rate increase to five to 10 beats higher than normal. Overtraining also puts you at increased risk of overuse injuries and prolonged fatigue. **DM**



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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

RASSELBOCK BACKYARD ULTRA

Anna Harding takes on a different kind of race on Forestry England land. A backyard ultra sees you crossing the start and finish line again and again until you run out of steam or fail to run fast enough... Brutal? Oh yes!

Run the same 4.19-mile loop every hour on the hour until you can't run anymore. Sounds like fun, right? I'm talking Type 2 Fun, of course, which is described as 'when a task is difficult at the time, but feels rewarding afterward, often because it challenges the practitioner to test their limits and grow'. And that's exactly the type of fun myself and 133 other runners were after when we took part in the Rasselbock Backyard Ultra at Sherwood Pines Forest in March.

It was Lazarus Lake who came up with the idea, the man behind the infamous Barkley Marathons. The original backyard ultra is Big Dog's Backyard

Ultra, which is held on his property in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, and is named after Lake's dog.

The rules are pretty simple: you complete a lap every hour, and the time left at the end of your lap, before the next hour starts, is the time you have to get



© DEAN TAYLOR

food, drink, go to the toilet or get changed. If you're not back on the startline when the whistle blows, you're out. The race is won when a single runner successfully completes a lap alone. If no competitor manages one more lap than the others, then there is no winner. Everyone else, no matter the distance they've covered, receives a DNF – a Did Not Finish.

The distance the runners race each hour is set at 6,705.6 metres, which is rounded up to 6,706 metres. The specific figure means that the total distance run by a competitor who manages to complete 24 laps is exactly 100 miles.



© DEAN TAYLOR

We set off at midday on the first loop, known as ‘yards’, on a pretty cloudy day. The scenery was stunning. The Forestry England site is well looked after and has some beautiful groomed trails.

One of my favourite parts of the course was near the beginning when you go past the visitor centre and high ropes playground. The forest remained open to other visitors for the duration of the race, which meant the bemused looks on their faces as we went past them over and over again never got old.

There are a few lumps and bumps in the course and a pretty epic downhill, which was enjoyable on the first lap. Later though, once everything started to ache, the down left my quads screaming. And the ‘lumps’ which started off as no big deal soon felt like mountains after I’d run them several times.

I completed the first yard in 49 minutes, leaving me 11 minutes back at the base to refuel, grab a very quick coffee and line back up ready to go again. The aid station was well-stocked with sweet and savoury treats, as well as hot and cold drinks which were very welcome.

The whistle blew and I was off again. Lap 2 took 49 minutes again, and I had the same routine back at base; eat, drink,

stretch and back to the start. I had just over 8 miles in the legs and was feeling good and raring to get back out again.

It’s a wonderful feeling having that ‘startline feeling’ every hour – not something you get to experience at any ordinary running race event. The camaraderie of getting everyone together each hour was brilliant and when the clock ticked over to 2pm, we were off again. Despite this being the third time I had run the same loop, it felt like I was seeing parts of it for the first all over again. A lovely wooded trail that went off the main path was my favourite that time around.

At the end of the third lap, which took 49 minutes again, and having run more than 12 miles, my legs were getting a bit achey. I had no idea how many yards I would manage, but if I was to play the long game here, I knew I had to take it easy, so I decided to put on a jacket and take some food with me for an easier

walk/run loop. This turned out to be far more stressful than I had anticipated, as I was constantly watching the time tick away, hoping I’d get back in time to not be timed out. I got back to base in 55 minutes, leaving myself a very short

turnaround to get ready to go back out again.

Although I may have saved my legs, this wasn’t an ideal situation to be in, so I ditched the jacket and got back to running the fifth lap.

I had three more laps in me

until, at the end of lap 8, I came across the finish line a minute after the others had set off on their next one. It turned out a total of around 28 miles in 7 hours was my limit and I was happy to receive my DNF fir tree sapling as a reward for failing to finish.

The winner completed 36 yards in total, which is over 150 miles. Second place was 35 yards (just short of 150 miles) and was a new Great Britain Female record! 🏆

// There are a few lumps and bumps on the course. What started off as no big deal felt like mountains after I’d run them several times //

The next Rasselbock mini Backyard Ultra, for those who fancy trying this format over 12 hours or 24 hours, is on the 23 September 2023 at Sherwood Pines Forest. rasselbock.co.uk

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DIARY

If you need inspiration to get you back in training and shooting for your next goal, these pages are for you. Whether you want a UK-based challenge or to run in iconic locations abroad, or you fancy a race with a theme, you'll find it here. From fun runs to ultra distances and with everything in-between, we'll see you on the start line!

TEAM AND ALL LEVELS

HEIGHTS ULTRA TRAIL

► Don't be put off by the name – this 'ultra' is an inclusive event with four distances that you can choose to run or walk: one mile, 10K, 50K or 50 miles. The route runs through the stunning scenery of West Yorkshire and there's a community fundraising festival with stalls, food and entertainment alongside the running. **From £19 for 10K, 2 Sept 2023, Huddersfield, racebest.com**

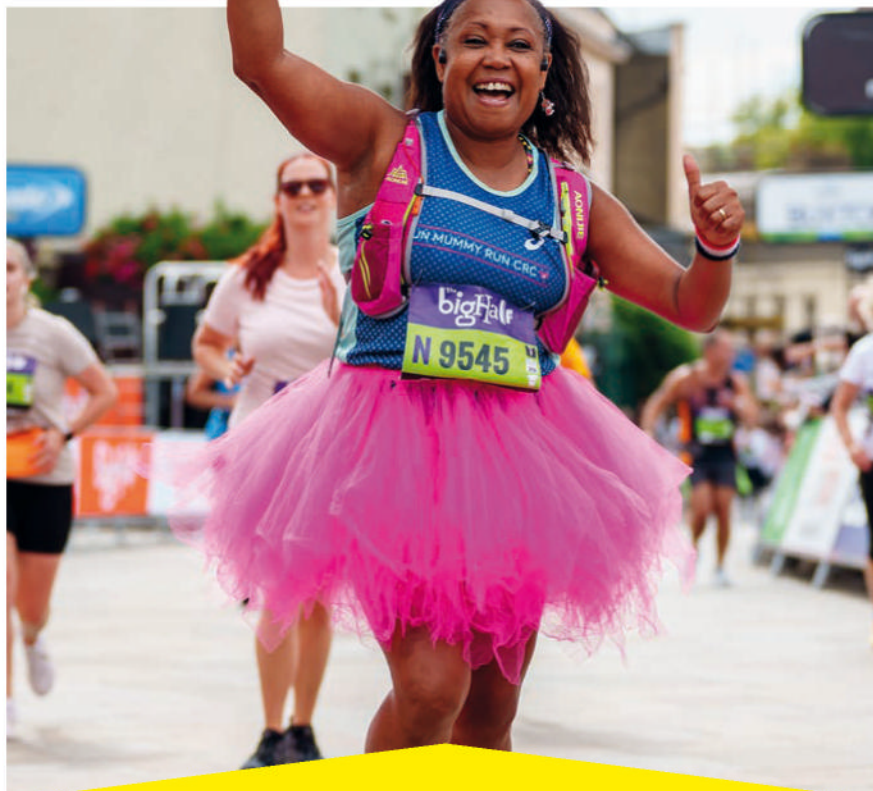
CHESHIRE 10K

► You can run this flat and fast course along the country roads of Cheshire as part of a team of six, or as an individual. A road-closed event around Hoole Bank, Picton and Wervin, plus a new junior race this year. **£150 for a team of six, 22 Oct 2023, Cheshire County Sports Club, Chester, runthrough.co.uk**

FUN RUNS AND BEGINNER

RISE 8K UNDERCLIFF RUN

► Help raise money for RISE, Brighton and Hove's domestic abuse charity. The route heads out from the undercliff at Saltdean, and awards for highest fundraiser and best fancy dress will be handed out on the day. **£30, 8 Oct 2023, Saltdean, riseuk.org.uk**



THE BIG HALF

► An exciting race from Tower Bridge, in central London, to the famous Cutty Sark in Greenwich. There's a half marathon, a team relay half, and a one-mile fun run from which to choose. **£56 for half, 3 Sept 2023, central London, thebighalf.co.uk**

BEDFORD 5K

► The last 5K event in the summer Race for Life series organised by Cancer Research. An event for all ages and abilities; children are encouraged to take part and discounts are available if you sign up as a family.

A mostly flat, single-lap course through the scenic Priory Country Park. **£15.99 for adult ticket, 30 July 2023, Priory Park, Bedford, raceforlife.cancerresearchuk.org**

INTERNATIONAL

SAN SEBASTIAN MARATHON

► A flat and fast race with just over two laps through the winding streets of this Basque coastal town including stretches of the spectacular seafront. The finish line is in the impressive Anoeta Stadium, home to the local football team, Real Sociedad. **Approx £74 for race entry, 26 Nov 2023, San Sebastian, Spain, zurichmaratonsansebastian.com/en/**

VENICE MARATHON

► Organisers describe the Venice Marathon as spectacular. It's flat and fast, and the route heads into the heart of Venice, crossing canals and passing famous sites, such as St Mark's Square. **From £53, 22 Oct 2023, Venice, Italy, venicemarathon.it/en/**



BACCHUS WINE RUN

► Running, wine tasting, food, fancy dress and music – what's not to like? It's fun but still a professionally organised race with an accurate, well-marked course. The route weaves in and out of Denbies Vineyard and sections of the North Downs. You get to sample wines produced on the estate as you run. **From £38, 10 Sept 2023, Dorking, Surrey, run-bacchus.com**

© THE BIG HALF



WALT DISNEY WORLD MARATHON WEEKEND

► The Walt Disney World Marathon is held every January in Orlando, Florida by runDisney. A family-friendly, unforgettable race through the Disney theme park so why not dress up as your favourite Disney character and bring friends and family to cheer you on. **Price to be announced, Jan 2024, Orlando, Florida, sportstoursinternational.co.uk**

railway track towards Harrogate. A lapped course where you can choose between 10K, half, 20 miles, marathon or even an ultra. **£30 for half, 5 Nov 2023, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, itsgrimupnorthrunning.co.uk**

EXPERIENCED

GLENMORE 24

► A round-the-clock race over two days in the Glenmore Forest outside Aviemore, in the Scottish Highlands. A stunning location and completely off road around a four-mile loop that heads out along forest trails passing Loch Morlich. Watch out for the hill about halfway around the course. Also, don't forget weather can be harsh at this time of year in the Scottish Highlands, so go prepared! **£90, 2 & 3 Sept 2023, Glenmore Forest, Aviemore, Scotland, runyarocket.com**

DELAMERE TRAILS MARATHON

► A new marathon through this Delamere Forest, outside Manchester. Sections of the race will take you deep into the forest, then head uphill for panoramic views of the Cheshire countryside. Half marathon also available. **£34, 5 Nov 2023, Delamere, Northwich, runthrough.co.uk** 📍

INTERMEDIATE

ANTRIM COAST HALF

► A scenic route along the Antrim coast road, it's relatively flat but with a couple of testing climbs, especially one around the 12-mile mark. Organisers say the course is one of the 'fastest half marathons in the world' and it has attracted elite runners in past years, including Sir Mo Farah. **£40, 27 Aug 2023, Larne, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, antrimcoasthalfmarathon.com**

BANGOR CITY 10K AND HALF

► A 10K through the city centre, out to the coastline and along the Garth Pier over the Menai Straits. Expect stunning views of Anglesey, Snowdonia and the North Wales coastline. **£26 for 10K, 8 Oct 2023, Bangor, runwales.com**

OLD MOTHER SHIPTON'S SHUFFLE

► A countryside trail route from Knaresborough which climbs gently up through parkland on to the old

SUFFOLK ULTRA

► Run through a unique coastal landscape managed by Natural England, the RSPB and the National Trust. Extremely flat compared to Endurancelife's usual challenging and hilly routes so may be good for ultra newbies. The ultra is 32.6 miles and there is also a marathon, half and 10K. **£71, 14 Oct 2023, Dunwich, Suffolk, endurancelife.com**



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FOOTNOTES

CHARLOTTE LETTIS RICHARDSON

American athlete and coach Charlotte Lettis Richardson has fought for the rights of women runners for nearly 50 years

An American coach for over 45 years, from school to club level, Charlotte Lettis Richardson has fought to change the face of women's running, both in the USA and around the world. As director of the 2005 documentary, *Run Like A Girl*, Richardson put the spotlight on what it means to be a competitive female athlete. The film focused on three female runners from different generations, and the battles fought by each to ensure equality.

As a successful athlete herself, Richardson achieved national and international success in distances from the 800m to 30K. In 1972, she started a women's running club, decades before the rest of the world caught on to the growth of women runners, while at the same time competing successfully herself. She won the 1975 Leggs Mini Marathon, and made the Olympic trials in the 1500m in 1976.

Disgracefully, before competing in a 10,000m race in Puerto Rico in the late 1970s, Richardson and her fellow female competitors were asked to disrobe in front of doctors to prove they were women. This was the era when women were still forbidden to take part in long-distance running (anything over 1,500m) and it would be years before the Olympic marathon would open up to women for the first time, in 1984 in Los Angeles.

Richardson fought back and founded the Women's Running Coaches Collective (WRCC), an organisation which champions both female coaches and athletes. The WRCC supports,

unites, informs, inspires, encourages and empowers women coaches at all levels of our sport, focusing on the expertise they can bring to running. The organisation advocates for the holistic approach that female coaches are able to give to each athlete, to improve not only their running performance but also their lives.

Today, despite women being able to compete at all distances in running, there's still a need to fight for equality and inclusivity in our sport, and Richardson is still active in the field. After 50 years as a coach, she's currently the head coach at Caldera High School, Oregon. 📍



CHARLOTTE'S CV

- Gold, New York City Mini Marathon 1975
- Olympic Trials Qualifier in 1976 (1500 meters)
 - National level performances at every distance from 800m – 30k
- 5th place, Cross Country Nationals 1974
- Winner of numerous New England and regional cross country and track and field titles



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