

Top 5 running injuries

Common Running Injuries to Watch For – Here's the top 5

1. **Plantar Fasciitis:** Refers to inflammation to the ligaments and muscles at the bottom of the foot. It is often described as a sharp, tight and painful sensation at the base of the heel. Pain is usually at worst in the morning and it may go away during the day and during running however will return afterwards. Runners who are at risk are those who try to run too far too soon, with high or low arches due to the over stretching of the muscles, as well as those who feet and ankles roll in or out excessively. Apart from poor foot positioning during running, tight hip flexors, poor core stability, and lower back pain can also contribute to plantar fasciitis.
2. **Iliotibial Band Syndrome:** The iliotibial band (ITB) is the long band that runs along the outside of your thigh and inserts into the knee. During running your knee is flexing and extending repetitively, causing the band to rub on the femur. This type of irritation can occur if you try and cover too much distance too soon or those that are running down hills excessively. Weakness to the hip muscles can also cause the ITB to stretch if your hip movement is not controlled. Strengthening these muscles and using a foam roller directly to the thigh and ITB can help reduce your symptoms.
3. **Patellofemoral Joint Syndrome (PFJS)** is the irritation of the cartilage of the underside of the patella (knee cap). Pain typically associated with PFJS normally occurs during or after long runs, prolonged periods of sitting, or while walking down stairs or hills. Excessive inward rolling of the foot and weakness to the quadriceps, hip, and gluteal muscle groups are the risk factors for runners. Avoid running everyday and reduce your distance if you can run without pain. Adding an incline to treadmill running can help increase your glute, hip and thigh strength which will prevent your knees from turning inwards during running.
4. **Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome (MTSS)** or shin-splints are caused by the pain from small tears occurring in the muscles around your tibia (shin). This injury is very common in new runners and those that have had an extended period of rest. MTSS will also occur in those runners who are wearing the wrong shoes or shoes that are too old, and those who have either high arches or flat feet. Those who are new to running may benefit from having their technique assessed, be fitted with the correct shoes, and to commence a gradual running schedule. Immediate pain can be treated with ice directly to the shin and taping techniques to relax and off-load muscle tension to the shins.

5. Achilles Tendonitis is the inflammation of the Achilles tendon. The Achilles tendon is the thick band of tissue that connects the calf muscle to the heel bone. Runners who dramatically increase their training, especially hills and sprinting, and who have weakness and tightness to the calf muscles are most vulnerable. Runners will usually feel sharp pain at the back of the lower leg just above the heel and will complain of swelling close to this area as well. The application of ice throughout the day and incorporating dynamic calf exercises (heel drops) daily will assist in management and prevention.

If an injury does occur, rest or modify your activity (such as swimming, deep water running, cycling and elliptical trainers) to allow overuse injuries to heal and inflammation to reduce. Commence a graduated return to running program to increase your distance once strength, flexibility, and endurance have returned. If you are suffering from continual pain, swelling, or loss of movement seek attention from your GP or physiotherapist.