

Knee Injuries and Running



Knee injuries are possibly the most common injury that runners experience, the one most likely to keep you from running for the longest time. Knee pain can be a warning signal that you need to change something in your running regimen, like your posture or the rate at which you are increasing your weekly mileage.

A main cause of injury, especially among beginning runners, is a sudden increase in mileage, which can lead to an injury called **runner's knee**. Symptoms include a dull pain behind or around the kneecap, pain when you bend the knee, pain that is worse when you walk downstairs or downhill, swelling, and popping or grinding sensations in the knee. The knee relies on a balance of thigh muscles to move up and down properly, and overrunning can accentuate any muscular imbalance and loading the knee cartilage, causing soreness.

This imbalance is often caused by **pronating** (running with your feet turned outward) or **supinating** (running with your feet turned inward). Also, if you hit the ground with your heels while running, the shock travels farther up your legs than if you hit at the middle of your step. To rectify muscular imbalance, you might shorten your running distance and make sure your feet hit the ground properly. Running stores stock shoes specially geared for pronators or supinators. The proper shoes, especially those with shock-absorbing soles, can reduce the impact on your knees.

Another type of injury affects the **iliotibial band**, a band of tissues running down the outside of your legs that helps control the knee joints and move the hips. As you run, this band can rub against the knees, causing a pain just above the knees to the side. This condition can also result from overtraining and from not stretching enough after exercise.

To alleviate and prevent these problems, start with a slow warm-up and finish with stretching to loosen up the leg muscles. For further relief, an individualized series of exercises might be in order. We can design a program that will keep you running and make your regimen easier and more effective.