

Beginner Mistake!

by Dr. Daniel Shaye, Chiropractic Physician



Surely after 27,000+ miles of running, I'm no longer making "beginner" mistakes, right?

Wrong.

We all make mistakes, even we veterans of many miles. If we're wise, we pay attention to the fact that the fundamentals are

identical for runners in their first week of running, and runners in their 50th year of same. The finest athletes in the land know that without a sound foundation, you can't build much. So, let's go back to the basics, and some of the basic mistakes.

Shoes. The general rule is that in 3-6 months, or 300-500 miles, most running shoes should be retired for lawn mowing or the dumpster. It might seem a waste to invest in new shoes after just a few hundred miles, despite the fact that the shoes are a year or two old. I recently made this mistake, and when I finally got new shoes I was stunned by how good it felt not to be running on dry-rotted relics. I should know better! But if I can make beginner mistakes, so can you; and I'll risk exposing my errors, if it helps you avoid them.

Too much, too soon. This is a classic mistake. New runners tend to improve quickly. In their exuberance, they get injured. Experienced runners can easily fall into this trap when they get out of shape and attempt to recapture their glory days. I'm reminded of a T-shirt that said, "The older I get, the faster I was." Be where you're at, and progress at a pace your body can handle. Be aware of the 10% rule: injury lurks when you consistently bump up your weekly mileage, or your long mileage, by more than 10%.

Speed kills. A classic beginner mistake is to take a race or workout out hard, and find yourself out of gas before you hit the finish line. Hold yourself back, especially if you're not sure of your potential. If you feel you held back too much, you can always push harder next time. Remember: top-level performers are able to finish the second half of a workout or race faster than the first.

Pain good. No, I'm not suggesting that pain is enjoyable or healthy in and of itself. What I'm saying is that pain is a warning signal to be heeded. It's a classic mistake to load up on anti-inflammatory medications to mute the body's alarm systems. Pharmaceutical companies suggest this is a good idea; but it's not. Lest you think only newbies make this mistake, be aware that even Olympians screw this one up. Unless you've got an extra liver, kidney, or GI system in the fridge, you might want to consider "going natural" and relying on ice, rest, and cross-training rather than med's. Better still: train smart and limit injuries in the first place.

Sleep. I used to have a note on my wall: "Eating is training. Sleeping is training. Running is training. Train to succeed." If you don't recover, you can't progress. Great runners work hard, and recover thoroughly.

Drink. No, not beer and coffee... though in and of itself, alcohol and caffeine are not sufficient evils to destroy a run or race. If you're dehydrated, your heart has to overwork to pump sludge. Furthermore, your muscles will be more prone to injury, and will recover more slowly. Stay hydrated, and reap the rewards.

Stay cool. No, mirrored shades and stylish outfits aren't the sort of "cool" I'm referring to. It's possible to overheat on a cold day (I've seen some rather good runners overdress for a race, only to overheat), but it's heat and humidity that together can compromise performance, health, and even life. Train your body to the heat, and don't live in an igloo. When you do run, stick to the shade and cooler times of day if you can't handle the heat. Consider hi-tech clothing that wicks away sweat. And if you feel yourself overheating, or worse yet, you start feeling paradoxically cold, back off. Live to run another day.

Until next month... happy running!

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Do you have a question you'd like answered? Mail your questions c/o Performance Chiropractic 1307 Jamestown Road, Ste. 103, Williamsburg, VA 23185; e-mail pchiro@performancechiropractic.com; or visit www.performancechiropractic.com