

Keeping fit

Life is manageable when you learn to run

By Caroline Harris

When you are driving in your car and see a runner go by, do you think they are different than you? That they were born super-fit? Truth is, anyone can become a runner and with a little determination so can you.

I honestly used to hate running. I can remember being forced to run in my gym class during my first year of university. I didn't look forward to it and was thinking very negatively about the entire process. My head would pound when my foot hit the ground and every cell in my being seemed opposed to even trying. Until one rainy day a switch went off inside me and I realized I was having fun getting soaked and that it was so freeing, drenching myself in the puddles. I let loose and began laughing as I ran with the rain streaming down my face.

I then realized that my toughest opponent was the one inside my head. I decided to face my fear of running and embrace all of the benefits it was

offering me.

Running promised to get me fit and firm my body, along with boosting my energy and mood. Sound impossible? Well it isn't, it has done so much more than that for me. Running allows me time to think and solve problems. It allows me the one chance I have in the day to be selfish and just think of me. I am no longer "mom" when I step out my front door with my shoes on! I leave all my worries behind and re-energize my mind, body and spirit while on the trails. Running has discovered strength in me that I never knew I had. Running has made me an athlete in all areas of my life and it can for you too. Thanks to running I can handle whatever comes my way.

You need to experience the transition from non-runner to runner to understand what I mean. So don't put it off any longer. Join a run club this spring.



Many folks think of excuses like they are too overweight or out of shape to run. The truth is, you don't need to be a fast runner to get results. In fact, I don't recommend working on speed until you have been running for quite some time in order to prevent injury. Believe it or not, anyone with a willing spirit can be a runner today. Anyone of any age or weight can

begin the process of becoming a runner. It is as simple as wanting to run, planning to run and then running.

If you have been living a sedentary life, just had surgery, have high blood pressure or some other condition, exercise is beneficial, but be sure to speak with your doctor to get the green light before beginning any exercise program. You may need the advice of a medical exercise trainer.

If you have heart disease, arthritis, hypertension, a good medical trainer will keep you working at a safe pace under supervision. If you are in good health a personal trainer can help you with running technique, proper training and motivation.

In any case, since you are putting your health in the hands of a trainer you must be sure that they are certified and hold valid first-aid training. Current certification ensures that your trainer is up to date on safety and exercise technique. Having a trainer that keeps your program fun is also a very energizing atmosphere that is key to keeping you coming back.

A trainer who can motivate you to work at a safe level and measure your success is vital to improving your health. Your personal trainer has a huge impact on your results so be sure he or she has what it takes to keep you safe, fit and having fun!

As a running coach, my goal is to



help you reach your running goals whatever they may be. Whether you improve your running performance, make new friends, enjoy the opportunity of running to your favourite motivating music, beat your personal best, run your first race or simply to have fun. The key ingredient is to listen to your body!

—Caroline Harris is a certified yoga instructor, personal trainer, CPT nutrition and wellness specialist, run and triathlon coach. Contact her at: www.pathwaytowellness.ca or 905-873-0745



Caroline Harris coaches Raeanne Kirk on her running form.

Photo by Ted Brown

Follow these mechanics of running

Before you begin running it is important to consider your running form; this is how you hold your body as you run. Ideal basic running mechanics include:

- Relax your upper body and hold your abdominal muscles in tight
- Your torso naturally follows the lead of your head so your eyes should look 20-30 metres ahead of you
- Palms face inward and slightly upward with your elbows near your sides. Swing your arms back and forth in a relaxed rhythmic manner rather than across the body
- Have your foot lightly strike the ground as your body weight transfers heel-to-toe to push off.
- Minimal knee lift, more of a shuffle than a stride.

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