

Los Angeles Pediatric Society E-Newsletter

Volume 2 No. 1

March 2015

LAPS WITH L.A.P.S. : THE SPORTS MEDICINE CORNER



Top 10 Tips for Running Safety for Your Patients (and for you!)

Tracy Zaslow, MD

Pediatric Sports Medicine Specialist

Running is a great way to stay fit and enjoy the outdoors. With summer just around the corner and track season kicking off, many are thinking of strapping on some running shoes and there is no better time to start a great fitness habit. Running doesn't have to be just for adults; children, with appropriate supervision, can enjoy running too. Here are some tips for children and adults to stay safe and avoid injury while your patients (and you and your family) become lean machines.

- 1) **Get the “no pain, no gain” mantra out of your head.** Athletes should never be encouraged to play through the pain and running is no different. While muscle soreness does occur during training, the soreness should not increase during a run; if pain is increasing with activity do not continue the activity. And, when the pain is in any joints (hips, knees, ankles, etc.) or associated with swelling further evaluation by a sports medicine physician for possible injury is advised.
- 2) **Good nutrition and hydration!** Eat high quality carbohydrates (ex: bagel, pretzels, etc) 2-3 hours before running. Do NOT skip breakfast! Drink water steadily throughout the day to pre-hydrate. During running, replenish with small amounts (1-2 ounces) every 20 minutes. If running >1 hour, drink a sports beverage instead of water. Sports beverage should have sodium (Na), potassium (K) and glucose/dextrose. Avoid “sports drinks” with artificial sweeteners and special additives (ex: caffeine, ginseng, etc.).
- 3) **Don't try to run a marathon on your 1st day out!** Gradually increase running distances and intensity. The general rule of thumb is to increase about 10% per week. Remember that even taking a break of 1-2 weeks off from running/cross-training can decrease your fitness so when you restart your regimen, start at minimal distance and gradually increase your times and intensity by about 10%.

- 4) **Run on level surfaces.** If you never paid attention you probably never noticed that most roads are designed to rise from the curb to crown of the road; this helps avoid pooling of water during a rainstorm to keep roads safe for drivers but puts runners at risk for overuse injuries. If you enjoy running the same route regularly, make sure to change directions or vary the side of the street each run. Also, when including hill runs in training, allow extra time for recovery as these runs are more intense and more traumatic to the body.
- 5) **Don't forget the wonders of cross-training.** Incorporating other athletic activities into your running regimen is an excellent way to improve cardio-vascular training without further impact on the joints. Also, it's a great alternative when there is a lower extremity injury, or even just a lot of muscle soreness as you build your endurance. Cross-training ideas for cardiovascular fitness include swimming, biking, and elliptical trainer. And, it's great to incorporate some strength and flexibility work into your cardiovascular training as well, so test out that local yoga or pilates class or even try martial arts or water aerobics.
- 6) **Shoes don't cure injuries but they can help prevent them.** Get the right fit—If you are just starting out with running it may be worth your time to go to a running shoe store with an experienced sales staff who can observe your normal running pattern and help you select a shoe that's right for you. Also, remember shoes do wear out and this wear and tear ruins the shock-absorbing function of the shoe; replace shoes after you have pounded the pavement for about 300-500 miles.
- 7) **Flexibility is helpful.** Tight muscles can overpower needed muscles and not enable all the muscles to achieve the needed strength. For example, when the muscles in the back of your thighs (the hamstrings) are too tight it's hard to get the buttock muscles (“the gluts”) strong and those buns of steel are important for more than looks, “the gluts” help to maintain a healthy running gait.
- 8) **Don't forget your core!** We hear all about the “core” and core stability, but what does that really mean? The core muscles include the abdominals, lowers back and buttock muscles. Core stability refers to the ability to control the position and motion of the trunk and pelvis to allow optimum production, transfer and control of force and motion to the limbs. In other words, core strength enables you to be an efficient running machine! By getting the core strong and keeping it strong the pelvis is able to remain stable during the running gait which prevents many lower extremity injuries.
- 9) **Face traffic while you run.** A recent study published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention* (October 2012) confirmed that running while facing traffic results in a 77% decrease in fatal and non-fatal injury to runners.

10) **Have fun!** Running is a great way to get in shape and stay in shape and there are lots of ways to make it fun. Grab a buddy and challenge each other. If you're trying to motivate your kids off the couch to join you, come up with a family competition to encourage each other to achieve healthy goals; remember kids are encouraged to get one hour of physical activity a day and adults can strive for 30 minutes or more of physical activity at least 5 days a week. The treadmill is a great option, but try switching it up with a neighborhood run and enjoy the exhilarating fall air and the local scenery. Find some upbeat tunes to listen to; research studies have shown listening to music with a higher tempo helps you run faster and keep you motivated longer.