

RUN INTO SPRING!

By Eunice Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH, Clinic Administrator, Foot Center of New York

Every few days now, an afternoon holds the promise of spring, and people everywhere are thinking about running again. Running is a great fitness activity and an exciting sport, a great source of well-being but also a potential cause of painful injuries.

The way each body part -- hips, knees, ankles and feet -- works singularly and together to produce movement is called biomechanics; a runner with good biomechanics strikes the ground and moves forward in an efficient manner. A runner with poor biomechanics of



any of these body parts -- a foot that over-rotates inward with each foot strike (pronation), for example -- is more likely to suffer an injury.

Running injuries, major and minor, are very common. Everyone, however, can follow these simple steps to avoid many minor injuries: pick a good

running shoe, one that offers good support, cushioning and comfort, and that fits with your preferred running socks. Stretch before a run and start running gradually, building time and distance slowly. Stretch after a run too.

A pain while running, however, is a signal to stop. While a podiatrist should be a serious runner's friend, pain should bring any type of runner to a podiatrist's office as well. Experts in the functions of and injuries to the foot and ankle, podiatrists can not only treat the injury, but analyze a runner's gait

(hopefully before injury) to see if his/her biomechanics are working well, and can prescribe custom orthotics (inserts) if the foot's biomechanics need correction.

A podiatrist can help prevent, as well as treat, the most common running injuries. The American Podiatric Medical As-

sociation (APMA) identifies these as the top five: plantar fasciitis, inflammation of a band of tissue that runs from the heel to the toes, causing pain on the bottom of the foot; Achilles tendonitis, inflammation of the tendon that runs from the back of the lower leg to the back of the heel; Morton's Neuroma, a swollen or thickened nerve in the front of the foot; stress fractures, fractures in the lower leg caused by repetitive

force; and shin splints, pain in the front or side of the shins.

Are you not exercising due to foot pain? Go to a podiatrist and get back on (the) track.

Dr. Eunice V. Ramsey-Parker, DPM, MPH, is Clinic Administrator of the Foot Center of New York at 55 East 124th Street between Park and Madison Avenues. Learn more about the Foot Center at www.footcenterofnewyork.org.

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