

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT...

# RUNNING

Follow our experts' simple steps to running success and you can't fail to go the distance



### WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Weight loss and improved fitness are just the tip of the iceberg, says endurance athlete and running coach Gemma Carter (cartercoaching.co.uk): 'Running can also help you to tackle daily stress, improve symptoms of depression and give you a real feeling of achievement and satisfaction – while packing a hefty punch with those amazing endorphins!'



### WHERE SHOULD I START?

Technique coach Chris Adams (therunning-coach.co.uk) recommends running at a pace you can chat at. 'The thing that puts new runners off is that it's hard. They get red-faced, breathless and tired. If you can't run a mile without feeling exhausted, start by walking for two minutes, and running for one. Gradually increase the time you run and decrease the time you walk.'



### 1 WHAT KIT DO I NEED?

A sports bra, t-shirt and shorts should suffice, but the most vital ingredient is the right shoes. 'Make sure they're tailored to your foot and running style, with enough support and grip,' recommends Gemma.



### 2 HOW LONG AND FAR SHOULD I RUN?

Consistency is key, says Gemma – so avoid radically altering the distances and frequency of your runs. 'The common building scale is 10 per cent per week,' she explains. 'A person starting with 10 miles a week or 50 minutes in total could increase this gradually to 11 miles or 55 minutes. Or, if you start with 10 minutes, aim for 11-12 minutes after a few days; don't jump straight up to 60.'

### 3 WHAT IF I DO TOO MUCH TOO SOON?

Injury and fatigue are common consequences, says Chris, who recommends beginners take a rest day between runs. 'Gradually, your distance will increase and one day on, one day off can become two days on, one day off, then three days on, one day off – until you reach your capacity to run consecutive days without soreness or impact.'

## 'WEIGHT LOSS AND FITNESS ARE JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG'

### 4 HOW SHOULD I WARM UP AND COOL DOWN?

Chris advises a 5-10 minute walk to warm up, increasing the pace briskly towards the end. 'If you stretch cold muscles, you risk damaging them,' he says. 'I recommend movement instead. Get the mind and body ready by warming up gradually.' To cool down, Chris suggests gradually reducing the intensity, before stretching your calves, your quads, your glutes and your buttocks.



### 5 SHOULD I FOLLOW A SPECIAL DIET?

As long as you have a healthy, balanced diet and ensure you are adequately fuelled and hydrated before a run, you should be fine. 'Caffeine before exercise can enhance endurance and speed, but beetroot juice is an increasingly popular and healthier option,' Gemma notes.

### 6 HOW CAN I AVOID INJURY?

Progress steadily and don't overload your body: give it time to adapt and grow stronger. 'Consider a running technique and gait analysis before you start running more frequently,' Gemma suggests. 'Trainers and running coaches with experience will be able to spot mistakes that may lead to injury, and recommend strength work specifically tailored to your muscle weaknesses.'

### 7 HOW IMPORTANT IS TECHNIQUE?

Very! 'As a child,' recalls Chris, 'I was taught to run faster and further with big, long strides. In reality, we should do the opposite. Your stride should be nice and short, with good, upright posture, relaxed shoulders and small, quick steps.'

### 8 HOW IMPORTANT IS ROUTINE?

Again, very! Routine keeps you from overdoing it, yet ensures you're

running regularly enough to achieve your goals. 'Make sure you design a routine that fits into your normal lifestyle, or you'll never be able to keep to it,' Gemma warns.

### 9 HOW CAN I STAY MOTIVATED?

Have a specific target in mind, such as running for a charity. 'Setting yourself goals means you've got a reason to get out and run,' says performance consultant Andy Barton (thesportingmind.com).

He advises creating a 'journey' to your target, with objectives building to the week and day of the race: 'What you do in each training session then has meaning because it links to all the other goals. Even if you only improve by a few seconds, you're still going in the right direction.'

Andy also stresses the importance of the right attitude towards running: 'Instead of saying, "I've got to go out running today," say, "it's my time to go running." Have fun with it. Running with a smile on your face can change how you feel. Kids run for the fun of it and sometimes we need to be a bit childish about our running, too!'

## Are you overdoing it? Watch out for the warning signs!

**1** It's natural to feel sore during training, but a specific, worsening pain could be a sign of something serious. 'It's an indication that something is overworked, or isn't functioning correctly for the load you're giving it,' warns running coach Gemma Carter.

**2** Feeling constantly stiff and sore, even after rest days, is another sign that you haven't fully recovered. Take more time to rest. It'll give your muscles the time they need to recover adequately, plus it'll mean you're fit and raring to go when it comes to your next run.



**3** If you used to be energised by running, but have lost your drive, you may be overdoing it mentally. 'This means general exhaustion, not just "I can't be bothered to run today";' Gemma says. 'You need a rest! Remember, it's meant to be fun!'

## REAL RUNNERS

## STEP IT UP!

Three inspirational women tell us how running has changed their lives



**'Running has given me focus and energy'**

CLAIRE D'AURIA, 36

After almost two decades away from the gym, Claire found her fitness focus when her sister was diagnosed with a brain tumour.

'It was a very stressful time,' says Claire, whose sister Suzanne was diagnosed in March 2012. 'The tumour was the size of an apple.' Fortunately, medics were able to remove it, but the recovery process wasn't so simple and Claire is grateful for the support Suzanne received from the NHS.

Keen to give something back by raising money for Brain Research Trust,

### 'THE FIRST MONTHS WERE TOUGH'

Claire joined a local gym, with the goal of completing a charity 10K. 'The first months were tough,' says Claire, who suffered shin splints, 'but I quickly developed a love for running. It's given me focus and energy. I feel great!'

Thankfully, Suzanne has recovered well, and plans to be at the finish line to support her sister when she completes both her 10K and her next goal, a half marathon. 'She thinks I'm mad,' laughs Claire, who works in digital marketing. 'The adrenaline is going to kick in on the day. I definitely feel ready for it.'



**'Hospital rubbish motivated me to do it'**

KAZ WILLMER, 29

Kaz took up running when chronic gallbladder problems put the brakes on her snowboarding.

'I lost four-and-a-half stone in eight months and was in A&E a lot,' says Kaz. 'Whenever I had an attack, I was completely crippled, but running kept me sane when I was feeling OK.'

Surrey-based Kaz began running 20-30 minutes every other evening – a routine that gave her much-needed focus after six months of ill health.

Even unexpected surgery to remove her gallbladder couldn't stop her running a 10K: determined Kaz finished in an impressive 53 minutes, just three weeks after surgery and three days after being given the all-clear to resume training.

'I could not have been happier,' says the teacher, who has a diploma in nutrition and has begun a course in personal training. 'I was amazed: I'd never run so fast before. All the hospital rubbish motivated me to do it.' Another 10K followed, although subsequent surgery sadly prevented her running a planned half marathon. However, she's determined to conquer the distance eventually – and insists none of it would be possible without her inspirational gallbladder!



**'People can relate to me being big and unfit!'**

SIAN KNELLER, 33

Sian turned a failed attempt to climb Kilimanjaro two years ago into an amazing lifestyle overhaul.

Returning home to Oxfordshire after her disappointment, Sian recruited a personal trainer, joined a slimming group and began working towards a half marathon. 'It suddenly clicked: this is how you're supposed to do it,' she says. 'You've got to change your whole lifestyle.'

In a matter of months, Sian had lost two stone, climbed Jebel Toubkal in Morocco and signed up for a marathon. She also shaved eight minutes off her 5K time, completing it in just 26 minutes.

Keen to motivate others to get fit and achieve their dreams, freelance medical writer Sian now pens a fitness blog, *dashing-divas.com*, which she hopes will inspire other women. She's also busy with a PT diploma and her own running club.

'I think people can relate to my experience of being bigger and unfit,' she says. 'They don't want to hear from somebody who's always been skinny and doing sport since they were a kid.'

With another half marathon, a duathlon and a 50-mile ultramarathon on the horizon, Sian has come a long way. 'I've completely changed my life!' she says. ☑