

SPORTS INJURIES

What if there were warning signs and guidelines to help you manage the ever-present risk of overdoing the running that we all love so much? As general rule of thumb - if it is sore when running, run slower and shorter. If it is sore even when walking, don't run!

Sometimes we need a "mandatory 8-count" where you need to rest aggressively, i.e. no cross training or strength as it will just irritate the injured area and delay recovery!



	DETAILS	WHAT'S HAPPENING?	WHAT TO DO?
GRADE 01	Slight discomfort after training, disappears after a while.	Minor tissue damage (or over stretched muscle) with small percentage of the muscle fibres affected.	Reduce intensity and volume of training. Apply R.I.C.E. (Rest / Ice / Compression / Elevation) Focus should be on promotion of tissue healing, swelling reduction, and rest!
GRADE 02	As more muscle fibres gets damaged, training becomes slightly more painful during exercise but doesn't prevent you from training. You may be a little stiff in the morning.	Inflammation and tissue damage has increased and there is an increase in pain, swelling and it starts affecting muscle function.	Eliminate faster running for a while, and reduce the distance of easy runs (as long as there is no discomfort during easy runs). Still apply R.I.C.E and possibly anti-inflammatories. Consult a physio or biokineticist.
GRADE 03	A large area is affected now that is painful during exercise. Pain lasts throughout the session and forces the you to alter the session.	Torn muscles fibres embark on a healing mission during in this inflammatory phase involving coagulation and sealing off of blood vessels and decreasing flow of blood. Lasts 48-72 hours.	If there is pain while walking there should be no running! Since fibres are either torn or swollen or both there should also be no stretching or heat treatment as it will counteract the inflammatory phase. Focus should be on restoring full movement.
GRADE 04	Pain now severely restricts your running ability leading to compensation and favouring the leg as well as discomfort even when not running. Continued training may well lead to secondary injuries!	The body is quite adapt and eager to start the healing during the initial fibroblastic phase where fibres are "knitted" back together again. Could last up to three weeks. Next phase is the remodelling phase where tissue returns to normal function.	Primary goal of the healing process is to resurface/restructure/strengthen the damaged area. Mild stretching as well as a rehab regime will promote circulation, reprogramming and strengthening of the weakened area to prevent re-injury and prepare for returning to training.

Getting injured happens to most runners at some stage, especially if you are motivated to improve and be the best runner you can be! Injuries however are not only disappointing, but can also be very frustrating and cause a range of emotions not to dissimilar to five phases of grieving! www.stack.com/a/5-stages-of-injury-recovery



DENIAL

When you first experience the shock of an injury, you immediately begin an internal dialogue in which you try to convince yourself that it's not that bad. You probably try to run, jump or throw, a typical form of denial that often makes matters worse. Another common thought is that the injury will ease off in a couple of days. If you continue to train, this can also aggravate the injury. In extreme cases, athletes pretend there is no injury.



ANGER

Often fuelled by thoughts like "Why me?" or "Why now?" you direct anger at yourself for a mistake that caused the injury, or at someone else you think is responsible. Perhaps you got hurt during a critical part of the season. It's natural to feel angry. You might even direct it at family and friends, because they don't understand the sense of loss you have when training stops. Platitudes definitely worsen the situation.



BARGAINING

In a sense, this is an extension of denial. You accept the injury and endure the pain, but you try to ignore it or overcome it by adapting your training to avoid the injured area. This usually leads to two things: your performance drops; and your body gets out of balance by overcompensating for the injury. You are bargaining with your body. And if your adaptations become embedded in your athletic performance, it makes them more difficult to correct.



DEPRESSION

If your training and goals were well planned out, your injury can have a greater impact, because it's more obvious what you're missing. Grieving over your enforced hiatus can lead to a form of depression, at least certainly a distinct sadness. You might feel like the entire season is lost, or that rehab will never get you back to 100%, or, worst case, that you will fall behind your opponents and never completely recover.



ACCEPTANCE

For rehabilitation to be effective, this is the stage you need to get to. The preceding stages are completely natural and understandable. Recognize them for what they are. Just saying that you have to "pull yourself together" is a form of denial. Work through that and other stages by talking to coaches, therapists and teammates. They can help get you to the point of acceptance. If you achieve acceptance early, you can start working on your rehab right away, even while you are going through the other stages.