

# Women's Running Magazine Australia



## Injury Management

Runners knee. Achilles tendonitis.



Stress fractures. Plantar fasciitis. These are all words that are common in a runner's vocabulary. And if you are one of the lucky ones who are blissfully unaware of such terms, chances are that if you run, you probably won't be for long.

Studies have found that the yearly incidence rate for running injuries is somewhere between 37-56% for a recreational runner. Or for those of you who are more serious about clocking up your kilometres, the incidence of injury varies between 2.5 and 12.1 per 1000 hours of running.

But perhaps the most alarming finding for females is that

<http://www.womensrunning.com.au/features/injury-prevention/230-injury-management.html>

women are increasingly being found to be more prone to running related injuries, such as stress fractures and ACL tears, than our male counterparts. The reasoning behind this is apparently due to anatomical differences between male and females, such as lower muscle mass and bone density. However, while there has been much research surrounding injury incidence and injury management, there seems to be limited literature on the mental affects of not being able to continue with your regular exercise routine.



Many physiotherapists suggest cross training and undertaking a diverse range of other activities to maintain both your physical fitness and mental positivity. However, if you are anything like myself, you like to run. Not swim, cycle or walk. But run. And when you can't, it becomes very difficult to maintain the same level of enthusiasm and motivation that you usually do.

Ruth Anderson, Director of sports psychology business MiND HQ, says the key to approaching these alternative activities with the same attitude and effort you would if you were running is to 'control the controllable'.

'Keep your thinking in perspective, and stay in control of what you need to do to manage the injury effectively. Firstly accept that you need to change your training program while injured rather than fighting against it. Be clear on what the benefits will be from cross training, and the gains that can be made by engaging in these activities.'

While cross training can be tedious, it is a great opportunity to work on areas that need improvement. You will also find that when you are able to resume training, these improvements will significantly benefit your running in the long term and make the transition back to your pre injury fitness a lot smoother.



Although it is extremely difficult to maintain a positive outlook when your physical condition is far below your ideal, Anderson says there are steps you can take to stop you from becoming completely discouraged.

‘Focus on improvement and skill development, rather than thinking about the level you were at before your injury. Set yourself two or three areas to focus on and make an action plan for how you will achieve it. You will see progress, and your motivation will increase as you develop your ability. Review what you have achieved at the end of the week and set yourself new tasks that will challenge and extend your ability for the next week.’

If you are able to manage your expectations about your ability, you will be able to set realistic goals that you perceive as achievable. And if you simply cannot drag yourself to the pool? Anderson says that using an injury period to have a rest and rejuvenate is sometimes just as effective as any cross training would be. ‘Find other enjoyable activities to engage in while you are not running which will assist in maintaining a positive mood and feeling confident about yourself across all areas of your life.’



Although somewhat clichéd, the key to keeping this perspective is to simply take it one step at a time. ‘The more effectively your rehab is managed the better the future outcome. Small steps will lead to significant change if you allow yourself to stay in the moment and keep setting small challenges to move forward,’ Anderson says.

In the end, more often than not, an injury is just a small hurdle along the way to your more significant fitness goals. ‘Ensure that you have balance in your life, and use every opportunity that presents to you both in sport and life to challenge yourself to be the best you can,’ Anderson stresses.

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