

Running and osteoarthritis



Common questions

Many people think that running damages the cartilage in our joints leading to questions such as:

- Will running give me **osteoarthritis (OA)**?
- Will running give me **bad knees**?
- Will running **hurt my hips**?

However, evidence shows that running and other exercise are generally safe for joint cartilage.



New research

- Some research suggests **recreational runners** may have a **lower occurrence of knee and hip arthritis** compared to nonrunners/sedentary people and competitive runners.
- The role of running is **unclear** in OA, particularly **competitive running**.
- Running **may protect** against future **knee replacement** surgery.
- Cartilage generally **recovers well** from a single running bout and seems to adapt to repeated exposure.



How to run safely



Start slowly – if you're not used to running start with just two minutes and build up gradually.



Do some **strength training** to help strengthen the muscles, tendons and ligaments, such as squats and lunges. You can do these with a weight as you progress.



If you have knee **pain that persists for more than one hour** after exercising, or the morning after a workout, it's a sign that the joint may have been **overloaded**. **Don't stop exercising**, but adjust what you're doing, eg **consider shorter and more frequent workouts** – instead of running for 30 mins, do 2 x 15 min runs.



Consider the **surface that you run on** – a flat firm grassy surface or running track will minimise the impact on your legs.



Invest in some **good quality comfortable running shoes**, especially if you are running on concrete or asphalt.

A physiotherapist can guide you on how to start or progress your running if you have or are at risk of osteoarthritis. Exercise also offers lots of other benefits for your body and mind!



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