

Soothing Elements

Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork
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Running injuries

Massage helps prevent and heal injuries

Running is a strenuous activity — and one that pays off by building strength, and boosting overall physical and psychological health. That said, most runners will have at least one injury in their running careers. Regularly stretching the calf and hamstring muscles helps prevent injuries. Massage also helps boost conditioning and prevent injuries.

How massage helps

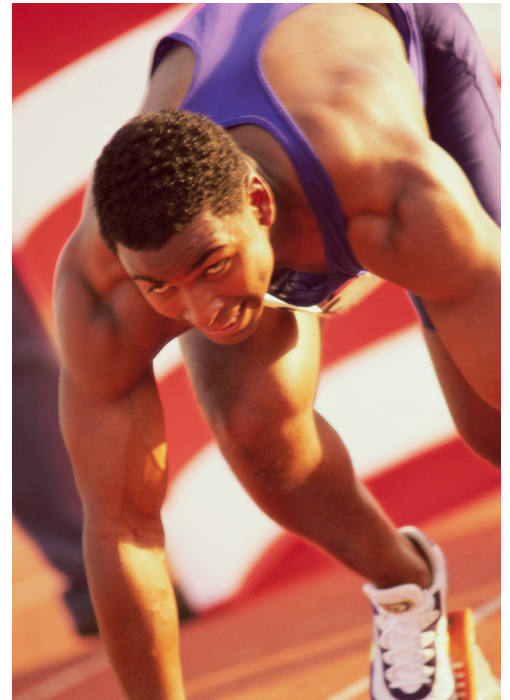
In between strenuous training workouts and events, massage allows the muscles to relax, which helps build healthier tissues. To begin with, relaxed muscles don't produce as many of the waste products that irritate tissues. And when tight, bunched muscles relax and lengthen, they don't press as much on surrounding structures. This helps restore circulation, and improves the flow of nutrients and natural pain-relievers to the stressed area. Finally, relaxed muscles allow the body to heal

the tiny tears and other “micro-traumas” which can result from strenuous exercise.

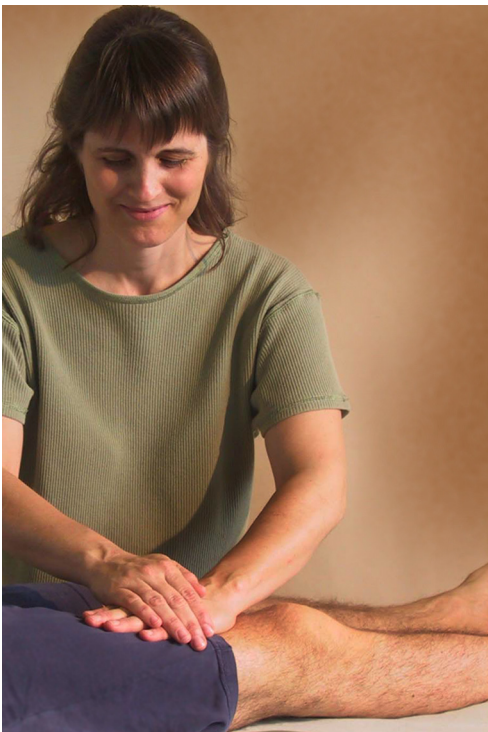
If you have an injury

Shin splints, Achilles tendinitis, and calf muscle strain are some of the more common injuries people can experience when they run. One of the most effective treatments is rest. If you have an injury, there's also a good chance you need new, or different, shoes.

Massage treatment for running injuries often works best when it is frequent and gentle, especially in the beginning. After a period of rest and a series of treatments the pain should ease, and you can resume your running program, stronger than ever. ❖



Stretching and massage can keep you running longer and stronger.



Massage lengthens tight muscles and helps restore overworked tissues.

Give your legs a massage

Special “rubs” for runners and walkers

Try these moves in between massage sessions, especially after working out. If you want to rub with oil, try adding a little essential oil of eucalyptus, peppermint, or rosemary, no more than 10 drops of plant oil to an ounce of massage oil.

Note: If any of these moves are painful, discontinue and consult your primary health practitioner.

1. Sitting on a chair or on the floor, begin by using both hands to squeeze and release the upper thigh. Work downward toward your foot. Work the front, back and both sides of the full length of both legs.
2. Roll the calf muscle back and forth between the heels of your hands. Work both legs from the knee to the ankle in a rhythmic motion.
3. Pressing deeper into the muscles, make circles with your fingertips or the heel of your hands, working up and down both legs. ❖

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Stretches for walkers

Keep your muscles flexible and your joints lubed

Walking in supportive shoes with flexible soles can be one of the best forms of aerobic exercise. Combining stretching with your walking routine will help keep your joints lubricated and your muscles flexible, and can even help prevent injuries. The best time to stretch is after your muscles are warmed up with exercise. If a stretch is difficult because of tight muscles, mention it in your next massage session so that the area can be addressed. If you experience pain with any of these stretches, consult your primary health practitioner.



Quadriceps stretch

Lift your right foot behind you and grasp your foot or ankle with your right hand. If you wish, stand next to a wall or chair and place your left hand there for balance. If you can't reach your foot, use a strap to loop around the ankle, and then raise the foot behind you. Breathe and hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.

Calf stretch

Stand close to a wall you are facing. Lean into the wall, your hands placed on the wall at shoulder height. Move your right leg back only as far as you can keep that foot flat on the floor, but far enough that you can feel a comfortable stretch in your calf muscle when you lean into the stretch. Repeat on both sides, holding for 20-30 seconds.



Hamstring stretch

Stand upright, and extend your right leg so that your right foot is resting on a stair or block in front of you. Keep your right leg straight. Exhale, and slowly lean into that leg until you feel a comfortable stretch. Hold for 20-30 seconds and return to start. Repeat several times on both sides. ❖



No other activity bestows the blessings of exercise as easily, enjoyably, or safely as the simple act of going for a walk.

— Mark Bricklin, Editor of Prevention Magazine