

Information & Tips for Runners

Sleep

It is important that your runner is well rested. 8 hours of sleep each night is recommended, some teenagers need more. This should be every night, but especially the night before a race.

Hydration

Make sure he/she drinks plenty of fluids and not just the morning or day of the race. Generally, it is preferable to take in adequate fluids 10 – 12 hours before race time, as well as up to 2 hours before the race. Loading up on liquids immediately prior to race time is not a good idea. It is also important to consume liquids after the race to replenish fluids lost during the race. Each runner should bring a water bottle with them to the race. There will be water available in coolers to refill the runners' personal bottles. See the Guide to Your First Meet for specific recommendations.

Shoes

Cross country running shoes are very important. Your runner should have well-fitting shoes in good condition. This is the one necessity of our sport that can be expensive. A single pair of running shoes doesn't need to be fancy; it just has to fit well. The problem is that the shoes break down rather quickly and then can cause injury. Many runners buy a second pair of shoes after a few months (ideally of a different make or model) and then alternate. This prolongs the life of the shoes, gives a slightly different stress to the feet and legs and avoids any "break in" problem. Often our experienced runners own a pair of lightweight "racing flats" as well. Shoes are available from many sources; try to find a source with knowledgeable help. Two local stores are The Village Runner and Top to Top. Both provide discounts for local runners.

The Village Runner

1840 N Sepulveda Blvd
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
(310) 546-1888

Top to Top

4224 Lincoln Blvd
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292
(310) 821-6111

Examples of common running shoes are the Asics GT 2090's, the Brooks Adrenaline GTS 5's, the Nike Pegasus's, the Mizuno Wave Runner's, the Adidas Supernova's, and the New Balance 1221's. Remember, the most important factors in a shoe are comfortable fit and adequate support.

Uniforms

Uniforms must be worn at all meets. Often there is a league meet during the week and an invitational meet the following Saturday morning. Help make sure your runner's uniform is clean in time for every race.

Injuries

Unfortunately, injuries occur in sport and in life. Distance running is no exception. Fortunately, running injuries are generally not traumatic and usually can be easily rehabilitated with rest, common treatments, and a gradual reintroduction to training. Your coaches can often be quite helpful regarding common running injuries (they have most likely experienced them all), but they are not doctors. At best we can help you with minor problems due to overuse or lack of prior fitness, but for anything beyond that or a common condition that persists – see a doctor. Here are some things about injuries of which we are fairly certain:

The cardiovascular system improves faster than the muscular skeletal system. In other words, your heart and lungs will allow you to go farther and faster than your muscles and tendons are ready to go. This can lead to injury.

The common problems that we encounter involve the knees and shins. The knee is a complicated machine and shin pain can actually be caused by three different problems, so we do not want to over-simplify these conditions. However, the chances are good that the problem is not complicated and the following steps are certainly worth a try.

Running through an injury is not a good idea, especially for beginning runners. Rest is necessary. Generally we want an athlete to be pain-free before returning to running. Rest is also the key ingredient in dealing with illness.

As far as we know ice is good therapy and, with some exceptions, hot soaks are not. A joint can be iced with a commercial pack, a bag of frozen peas or corn, or ice-cubes in a baggie. An inflamed tendon, muscle pull or tear can be ice-massaged. To do this, fill a paper cup with water and put it in the freezer. Peel down the top of the cup and ice-massage the sore spot (you can use an ice-cube held in a wash cloth). Ice from 5 to 10 minutes and as often as once an hour if possible.

Check with your coaches for suggestions on stretching and strengthening exercises that are related to your particular injury

When returning to running after time off due to illness or injury, runners must start with a short run (perhaps only a mile) and then gradually build up. Don't be impatient, you can actually return to normal training quickly by just adding a mile per day. Your coaches will tailor this program to your individual needs. Athletes must be back in normal training before returning to the added stress of competition.

Support

Recognize that this is not an easy sport and the runners all work very hard. Go to as many meets as you can to cheer them on. And when they feel they have not done well, encourage them to keep trying. This is a team effort, remind your runner that every person they pass helps our team, even if they don't come in first.

The Team

As Cross Country is a team sport, athletes are encouraged to participate in team activities. Cheering for your teammates and attending pre-meet pasta parties are great ways to get involved in the team effort.

Outside factors

All runners balance busy schedules of academics and other activities. However, we are particularly concerned about beginning runners who also compete regularly in other athletic events. Quite often these runners experience injuries that are most likely the result of the combination of physical stresses. It is a good idea to focus, athletically, on Cross Country during the Cross Country season.