

Returning from Injury

There's a little more to it than simply resuming your training program

By Chelsea Clarke

Getting back in the game after being injured may be easier said than done. It's not simply a matter of rebuilding your physical training—time spent away can take a toll on your mental wellness, too.

Generally speaking, if you're recovering after a minor injury and have been out for less than two weeks, your progression can happen faster than if your pain was significant and caused a longer hiatus. Once you've rested and done the necessary physical rehab, i.e., you've regained full range of movement and have no swelling, you'll benefit from the following holistic approach to your triumphant return.

aerobic development. Next, add hill strides (intervals), with 20–30 seconds of work at a time. This will keep impact forces low while boosting aerobic output.

As hills and hill strides become second nature, your body is likely ready to go back to your usual training routine. Aim for a work progression of 10–20 per cent per week, but be sure to listen to your body. Feeling off? Take an additional rest day. Feeling great? Add in another



Training Derailed?

What happens if your injury happens in the middle of training for a marathon? Your first stop should be a medical professional's office (preferably a sports doc) to get an expert opinion. They'll give you their best advice on how long to rest, how best to recover, and whether (and when) you can resume training; a coach is the best person to help you figure out how to salvage your build-up (most likely with a modified goal for your result).

The mental side

Injuries can bring a host of mental anguish, from a lack of exercise-induced endorphins to feeling left out of your usual community. If mental stress rivals your physical injury, Ashley Mateo, a Denver-based run coach and author of *The Rundown* blog, says there's no need to lean into suffering. "Even if you can't physically run, you can still immerse yourself in the sport: read books, listen to podcasts, support friends at races and so on," she says.

She recommends using the time off to re-evaluate your goals. "Ask yourself, how did I get here?" she suggests. "What can I do differently so I don't end up injured in the future?" She also advises branching out, in terms of hobbies and socializing, and cautions against tying up your identity or self-worth with running.

The physical side

Until you've rebuilt some strength, start with walking, progressing to running intervals of one minute on/one to two minutes off (i.e., walking). Increase frequency before increasing volume, recognizing that this stage is for re-introducing your bones, joints and connective tissues to the habit of running, rather than for trying to regain aerobic fitness.

Once that's accomplished and your runs naturally become faster, start adding load with hills. This stage prepares the body for harder work while increasing

run. Mateo advises assessing pain on a scale of one to 10 to record progress.

The support

When they say "it takes a village," they might be referring to the medical community that you should have in your corner. If this is your first running injury and you're not sure where to start, a chiropractor or physiotherapist may be helpful (especially if you can find one with expertise in running injuries). "Sports doctors are more diagnostic (think blood tests and bone scans), while orthopedists treat bone, muscle, tendon or ligament issues, and podiatrists specialize in feet," says Mateo. She adds that, while run coaches are not qualified to diagnose or treat injuries, they can usually recommend qualified professionals in your area, and they can help you figure out how to gradually and safely resume training. **R**

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