

10 Guidelines on when to run or not run:

1. **Any signs of serious injury?** These include swelling, a joint locking or giving way, severe pain, pins and needles or numbness, pain when feeling along the bone itself or a joint being restricted in movement (not just stiff but unable to move beyond a certain point and being less than the other side). Pain on impact or difficulty weight-bearing are also signs to be aware of. If you have any of these signs I would recommend a medical opinion. I might not dash off to the GP/ physio for a one off bit of swelling or pins and needles but if it's becoming a more persistent problem it's better to have it looked at.

2. As mentioned above, **consistent symptoms** are a little warning. Ask yourself was it here last time I ran and the time before? Is it just a one off? I've had some really sore one off pains that have never returned and I've never worried about them but if something comes back again and again I get it checked out.

3. **Can I run through it?** Many severe injuries (though not all) will be nearly impossible to run with. The pain will get progressively worse in most cases and you'll have to stop, although sometimes with the adrenaline pumping it can mask the pain. If the pain is getting progressively worse as you run, then stop, if it's feeling better with each stride and it's mild pain, you're usually safe to carry on. Let's be clear on this though, I'm not suggesting you just grit your teeth and push through it. If unsure, stop running and see if it settles.

4. **Does it stop hurting after running?** If you are totally pain free when you stop this is obviously a good sign. If it persists and affects everyday life then it may be a bit more serious and is worthy of getting checked out.

5. **Can I change it while running?** Does it stop hurting if I reduce my speed or stride length or change my running surface or stop and stretch? If a simple adjustment in your running stops it then again it's a good sign. Stick with that change for a few minutes then gradually return to your normal running style, often you'll be able to do that pain free. The theory is that sometimes the repetitive action of running stresses the same areas over and over again, a change reduces this stress and allows pain from it to settle. I've had it with ITS on my long runs, pain kicked in at mile 16, I reduced my stride length and by mile 17 it had gone again and felt fine after.

6. **What's the bigger picture?** I've ran nearly 500miles in less than 4 months, for some that might be normal but for me it represents a big increase in mileage. Would I expect to ache after doing that? Yes, it doesn't necessarily mean I'm

injured, just fatigued. If that's the case the symptoms should settle with a few days rest.

7. **Risk vs benefit.** With just over a week to go until my marathon an injury now would have very little chance to heal. I've done 99% of my fitness work so the benefit of running through pain doesn't nearly match the risk of injury. I'm not injured at the mo but if I was unsure about a run at this stage I'd take a rain check. A week into my training though, when I had months to recover I wouldn't be so cautious.

8. **Could I do something that might be more useful?** Sometimes a cross training session, specific strength, control or flexibility work might prove more useful in preparation for a race than running with a niggle. I'll often choose to strengthen the muscles around the problem area then have a and etratel

9. **Would rest actually be more beneficial than anything else?** Bare in mind that a lot of our body's adaptations and strengthening actually occurs when we rest. Runners seem to dread rest but it is an essential part of what we do. A carefully selected rest day can make all the difference!

10. **Am I overtraining?** According to the Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, there are 130 signs of overtraining! I won't go into them all here but they include heavy legs, fatigue, muscle aches, loss of desire to run, reduced running performance, low mood or irritability, loss of sleep, increased heart rate, etc.