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Return to Running Program

This program is designed as a guide for clinicians and patients through a progressive return-to-run program. Patients should demonstrate > 80% on the Functional Assessment prior to initiating this program (after a knee ligament or meniscus repair). Specific recommendations should be based on the needs of the individual and should consider clinical decision making. If you have questions, contact the referring physician.

General Instructions

Before starting this program, you should be able to walk one mile at a brisk pace, without a limp, and without any pain or swelling afterward.

1. Walking/jogging should be done no more than every other day.
2. Use other modes of exercise (bike, elliptical, swimming) for aerobic conditioning while increasing your running distance.
3. The program should be performed step by step. Do not advance your program until you can successfully complete the initial step. Let pain and swelling be your guide. If the activity creates pain, swelling, or causes you to limp, go back to the previous step.
4. Before starting the program and after completion of the program, allow 15 minutes to perform stretching exercises.
5. It is preferable to start on flat terrain, such as a treadmill or soft track, before moving to hard or uneven surfaces.
6. Ice the injured area for 20 minutes after exercise and cool-down.

Running Progression

Phase 1

Day #1: Jog $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, Walk $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, comfortable pace

Day #2: Jog $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, Walk $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, comfortable pace

Day #3: Jog $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, Walk $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, comfortable pace

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PHASE I: WARM UP WALK 15 MINUTES, COOL DOWN WALK 10 MINUTES

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Week 1	Walk 5 min, Jog 1 min x 5 reps		Walk 5 min, Jog 1 min x 5 reps		Walk 4 min, Jog 2 min x 5 reps		Walk 4 min, Jog 2 min x 5 reps
Week 2		Walk 3 min, Jog 3 min x 5 reps		Walk 3 min, Jog 3 min x 5 reps		Walk 2 min, Jog 4 min x 5 reps	
Week 3	Walk 2 min, Jog 4 min x 5 reps		Walk 1 min, Jog 5 min x 5 reps		Walk 1 min, Jog 5 min x 5 reps		Return to Run

**Only progress if there is no pain or swelling during or after the run

Phase 2

Day #1 Jog $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, Walk $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, comfortable pace

Day #2 Jog 1 mile

Day #3 Jog 1 mile

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PHASE II: WARM UP WALK 15 MINUTES, COOL DOWN WALK 10 MINUTES

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Week 1	20 min		20 min		20 min		25 min
Week 2		25 min		25 min		30 min	
Week 3	30 min		30 min		35 min		35 min
Week 4		35 min		40 min		40 min	
Week 5	40 min		45 min		45 min		45 min
Week 6		50 min		50 min		50 min	
Week 7	55 min		55 min		55 min		60 min
Week 8		60 min		60 min			

Recommendations

- Runs should occur on softer surfaces during Phase I
- Non-impact activity on off days
- Goal is to increase mileage and then increase pace; avoid increasing two variables at once
- 10% rule: no more than 10% increase in mileage per week

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You can continue to increase distance by $\frac{1}{4}$ mile per session until you reach your desired distance. When you have reached your training distance without causing any pain or swelling, and have a normal running form, you can gradually start to increase your running speed.

Running should be limited to 3 to 4 times per week with rest days in between run days. You should follow “periodized” training approach which utilizes the Heavy- Light-Medium format. For example, if your usual long run is 8 miles, then your “Heavy” run is 8 miles. If you are running three times per week, then your run distances would be:

Day 1: Heavy: 8 miles
Day 2: Light: 4 miles
Day 3: Medium: 6 miles

This approach will help prevent over-training and subsequent injury.

Shoe wear

Running shoes should be changed every 3 to 4 months due to the loss of the shoe’s shock absorbing capacity. Proper fit and support is important in minimizing leg injury. Talk to your physical therapist if you have questions regarding your shoe wear.