



TRANSITIONING INTO SPRING RUNNING:

Spring is here! You are probably excited to get outside and run. You may have a 5K or 10K race this spring that looks interesting to you and you are anxious to get ready for it and to do well. Depending on what you have been doing this winter, you need to be careful transitioning to spring running to avoid injury. Here are some guidelines:

If you have been running indoors all winter:

If you live in a climate like Chicago, you have likely spent the winter running on a treadmill or track. In this case, you need to transition carefully to running outdoors. The running surfaces and conditions outdoors are much different in terms of their impact on your body. To avoid injury, don't suddenly start running outdoors. Instead, follow this strategy:

- *Week 1* - move one of your weekly training runs outdoors - this should be one of your short, easy runs (no speed work or incline/hill training runs)
- *Week 2* - move a second weekly training run outdoors - this can be a speedier run such as a tempo run or interval training. Be careful with the speed work at first - you may want to slow your pace a bit the first time you do this run outdoors.
- *Week 3* - move a third weekly training run outdoors - this might be one of your longer runs.
- *Week 4* - if you run four times a week, move a fourth weekly training run outdoors - this would be your hill run (incline run on the treadmill) if you do one.

This strategy will allow you to adjust to the harder outdoor surfaces such as asphalt, concrete or hard crushed gravel.

If you have not been running all winter:

If you gave your body a rest from running this winter by cross training, you will need to rebuild your running program. You may still be in good aerobic condition due to cross training, but your body is no longer adapted to the impact forces of running. If you have been away from running for over 12 weeks, you will need to ease back carefully. Take even more care if you took that time off due to injury or illness. Here are some high level guidelines for your comeback:

- Start with alternating walking and running for 20 to 30 minutes. Listen to your body during this time. If you feel very tired or have aches and pains, proceed with caution. You may even need to start with a walking-only program until you can walk comfortably for 30 minutes 3 or 4 times per week.
- Running should be done at a moderate, conversational pace. Your first objective is to build back your endurance.
- Slowly decrease the walking breaks and increase the running time over the 20 to 30 minutes.
- Once you are running without breaks for 20-30 minutes, you can increase your mileage or your intensity over the following weeks depending on your goals. If you are training for a 5K, you may want to stick with 30 minute runs and increase your intensity/speed. On the other hand, if you are training for a 10K or longer race, you may want to increase the length of your runs while maintaining your moderate intensity. Don't try to increase intensity and mileage at the same time.

Listen to your body and ease into any changes in terrain, distance and speed this spring. Be patient with your spring running so that you have a healthy spring running and racing season. Have fun!