Whether you’re on the high school cross country team or the track and field team, or you’re training for your first 5K, running is a great form of exercise and sport participation. Done properly, running can enhance your health and fitness, coordination, physical and emotional development and sense of accomplishment. But make no bones, muscles or tendons about it: Running can cause a variety of injuries if you don’t have the proper training, nutrition or shoes.

**Common Running Injuries**

**Runner’s Knee**
“Runner’s Knee” is a general term used to describe a number of knee-related injuries. The most common of these is patellofemoral pain syndrome, which accounts for about 40 percent of running injuries. Patellofemoral pain syndrome occurs when the cartilage on the underside of your patella (kneecap) is irritated. Irritation can happen if you overuse your knee; have biomechanical issues in your hips, legs, feet or lower back; or do not engage your core when you run. Generally, pain worsens when you run uphill or downhill, or up and down stairs. If you have overpronation (excessive inward foot rolling) or weak quadriceps, hips or glutes, you’re more likely to develop patellofemoral pain syndrome.
Shin Splints
Medial tibial stress syndrome, more commonly known as “shin splints,” refers to pain along the tibia (shinbone). Shin splints can occur when you overwork the muscles, tendons and bones in your legs. Even overpronation, weak lower leg muscles, inadequate stretching and poorly fitting shoes can cause shin splints. You may also develop shin splints if you suddenly intensify your workout, or change the surface you run on.

Plantar Fasciitis
The plantar fascia is a thick band of tissue that runs across the bottom of your foot, and it connects your heel bone to your toes. It helps support the arch of your foot. Plantar fasciitis occurs when your plantar fascia is strained, causing it to become weak, swollen or irritated. Usually, the pain worsens when you take your first steps after sitting or standing for a long period of time, or when you climb stairs, but it should decrease after your first few steps. You are more likely to develop plantar fasciitis if you have overpronation, high arches, flat feet or tight Achilles tendons or calf muscles, or if you wear poorly fitting shoes.

Iliotibial Band Syndrome
The iliotibial (IT) band is a band of fibrous tissue that runs from the side of your hip to just below your patella. It provides stability to the outside of your knee joint during movement. Iliotibial band syndrome (ITBS) occurs when the IT band is irritated or inflamed because of soft tissue restrictions, poor biomechanical alignment, weakness or any combination of these conditions. Irritation or inflammation can cause pain when moving your knee. Usually, the pain worsens with continued movement and goes away with rest. If you’re an endurance athlete, or if you suddenly increase your mileage, you’re especially likely to develop ITBS.
Injury Prevention and Safety

As a runner, you’re most vulnerable to injury during four periods of time:
• During the first four to six months of running
• When you return to running after an injury
• When you suddenly increase your mileage
• When you suddenly increase your speed

Luckily, you can take preventive measures to minimize your risk of injury during these four periods – and every day. Here are some things you can do:

• Get a biomechanical assessment. A biomechanical assessment can help make certain you are ready to safely begin running — or take up any other sport. They can also help enhance your running technique and endurance. The best time for an assessment is about four to six weeks before you begin your running program. You can schedule a one-on-one biomechanical assessment with one of our Parkview Sports Medicine certified physical therapists.

• Remember the 10 percent rule. Don’t increase your mileage by more than 10 percent each week. Suddenly increasing the miles you run can cause overuse injuries.

• Do warm-up and cool-down exercises. Make sure you incorporate proper warm-up and cool-down exercises into your conditioning routine. This helps your body ease into, and out of, a workout, which can keep injuries at bay.

• Practice safe running techniques. Learning and practicing safe running techniques is important to maintaining your health and preventing injury. You should work with your coach, athletic trainer and physical therapist to achieve proper running techniques.

• Get adequate nutrition. Eating a healthy, balanced diet with the right amount of calories can enhance your performance. After running, maximize your recovery by eating a meal with fiber-rich carbohydrates, lean protein and heart-healthy fats. You can schedule a one-on-one appointment with our Parkview Sports Medicine registered dietitian nutritionist to discuss a meal plan to meet your performance goals.

• Wear properly fitting shoes. Make certain you have properly fitting shoes, and keep track of how many miles your shoes have logged. You should replace your shoes about every 600 miles, if not sooner. Usually, staff members at a specialty running shoe store can help you figure out what shoe is the perfect fit for you.

• Keep a running journal. Keeping a detailed running journal can help you track your mileage, intensity and progress. It can even help identify problems related to overtraining, if they arise. It’s helpful to record your mileage, course and how you felt before, during and after your run.

• Know your limits. Overtraining can cause overuse injuries, so mix up longer, tougher runs with shorter, easier recovery runs. Don’t forget to schedule regular rest days as well. They’ll help you stay healthy, and your body will thank you for it.
RunnIng from Injury

Pushing through the pain — and running from your injury — can make the problem worse. It’s best to stop running and correct the issue so you can hit the pavement again in the safest and shortest amount of time.

When pain or injury strikes, call Parkview Sports Medicine at (260) 266-4007. Our team of certified orthopedic surgeons, physical therapists, movement specialists and a registered dietitian nutritionist can provide you with rapid access to comprehensive care, sport-specific rehabilitation and sports nutrition information.

This is general information only and is not a substitute for a physician consultation.