

RUNNING MAN

Mark Herron, Consultant Foot & Ankle surgeon at The Wellington Hospital shares his knowledge and advice on running injuries in anticipation of the London Marathon

Once people get into distance running it seems to become addictive. Runners are used to 'running through', ignoring many aches and pains, so Nick Cullen (fellow consultant foot and ankle surgeon) and I appreciate that by the time a runner comes through our doors symptoms are reasonably serious.

Although there are no specific running injuries, problems are generally due to the effects of

says Nick. "If the shoes feel too tight, don't buy them as there is no such thing as a 'break-in period' for running shoes."

At The Wellington Hospital's Foot & Ankle Unit we work closely with specialist physiotherapists around London as well as specialist running coaches like Ben Pochee of LGN Wellbeing to make sure runners get the advice and treatment they need.

In runners, one of the common problem areas is the Achilles tendon. Most patients know it's their Achilles but have little idea of the processes affecting the tendon or that a lot of options exist before any operation need be considered.

The two main chronic problems it suffers are either a superficial inflammation (tendonitis) or deeper seated 'wear and tear' of the tendon (tendonosis).

If it is wear and tear, then the tendon tends to have a discreet and tender swelling, with normal and pain-free tendon above and below it. In either case the 75% of people respond to either a course of physiotherapy or temporary immobilisation in an Aircast boot.

It can take six weeks before symptoms start to improve. If it's important to have as little time away from sport as possible, then ultrasound-guided injections of steroid (or a patient's own blood cells) can be used.

Another common complaint is the stress fracture. Eventually pain is severe enough to prevent running, and once a stress fracture has been diagnosed, a period of rest is advised and with a pneumatic walking boot. Often surgery

is not needed but the optimal management of stress fractures is always prevention.

There are many simple things that can be done to prevent injury, such as joining a running club or enrolling the help of an experienced runner to set realistic targets and training schedules. Running distances should be increased gradually and 'cross training' is useful, where running is alternated with other forms of cardiovascular exercise.

At The Wellington's Foot and Ankle Unit, we utilize the latest advances and techniques, including minimally invasive and arthroscopic (keyhole surgery) techniques to effectively treat a wide array of injuries whilst reducing recovery times and allowing early return to training. So if you're currently training and suffering from a running injury, don't hesitate to make an appointment and we will certainly be able to help. ■

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repetitive high impact activity on the bones, joints and soft tissues. Injuries can be linked to pathological pain (due to acute or chronic injury), and mechanical pain (due to pushing physical tolerance).

The latter is a common problem and if you're going to take to distance running seriously, it's important that you do so gradually with a proper conditioning programme, advice on technique and the correct shoes. "Have both feet measured every time you purchase shoes"

CONTACT THE TEAM

NICK CULLEN is Consultant Foot & Ankle surgeon at The Wellington Hospital and The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital at Stanmore.

MARK HERRON is Consultant Foot & Ankle surgeon at The Wellington Hospital and to the British Gymnastics team. Contact them both at The Wellington Hospital on 0207 483 5148

BEN POCHEE runs LGN Wellbeing (www.lgnwellbeing.com) and can be contacted on 07900 921 124

TOP TIPS

LGN is the running specialist wellbeing company, providing the trusted source of knowledge, expertise and passion to people of all abilities keen to enjoy running as a fitness gift for life.

- Consistency, control and confidence are our key running principles. During a marathon, try to develop a gentle consistency without worrying about pace or distance
- Remember that running should be an enjoyable exercise and should be sustainable. Use initial sessions to find a personal running rhythm and ensure your training schedule fits within your lifestyle
- Turn off your iPod and GPS and listen to your body. Noticing foot stride, heart beat and breathing is the best way to understand how to vary pace and set tempo for running success
- The desire to build up the mileage can be overwhelming. To avoid injury, don't push too hard too soon – keep to short runs and progress gradually

LGN provides running services to BP, Jones Lang LaSalle, M&C Saatchi & Nike among others / www.lgnwellbeing.com