10 Absolute Best Ways to Get Faster and Avoid Injuries as a Runner

As a fitness professional for the past 12 years and an obsessive student of the sport of running for the past 20 years, I’ve come to realize some repetitive practices that helps one get stronger and faster out on the roads.

Throughout my career and still to this day, the number one question was “How do I get faster without injuring myself?” Initially, I knew a few tricks to get faster, but the avoiding injury part took years of studying the physiology, asking the experts, reading tons of materials and finally testing the theories not only on myself, but also with many of own clients that were willing to be the guinea pigs in the beginning of it all. I thank you all!
I’ve bundled it all together for an easy to read, easy to follow and easy to implement tips of the trade.

I hope you enjoy.

*Side note: Always consult with a physician prior to starting this or any exercise or running program. If you are just starting to run, I recommend getting in a good 3-4 months of steady pace easy jogging/walking prior to implementing any kind of speed workout.

Ok, now let’s begin
1. Hill sprints

Higher stroke volume of the heart (heart efficiency) and recruitment of more motor units per muscle fiber are two of the things necessary for speed and there is nothing better than doing hill repeats. Hill repeats engage all those running muscles and it’s nearly impossible to get into a rhythm which prevents the body from “getting comfortable”. This is probably the reason why people hate doing hills so much!

K-Tip: The moment the body becomes comfortable, it also conserves energy and stabilizes itself. That is not a bad thing and actually it’s a necessity for racing, but during training you’ll want to avoid the plateaus in order to get faster.

I used to hate it myself, even in College, and luckily (or so I thought at the time) I went to College in South Florida, where the only hill is the dump and the inter-coastal bridges. Needless to say, we would always get smoked when we had cross country meets out of state.

Do hills, you will get faster, I guarantee! Hills will recruit more muscle fibers; the connection between your nervous system and musculoskeletal system will be a lot more efficient. Both of those things translate to faster leg turnover while running on flat roads. You also benefit from pumping the arms up the hill, and core being...
activated—yeah, it’s pretty much a full body tone up workout, and it’s free. All you need is a hill!

Another positive of hill training is that you are recruiting all the running muscles without going at peak speed, which often leads to injuries, so it’s ok to add hill repeats every week! Make sure to do plenty of calf and Achilles stretches afterward since hills tend to pull on those areas a bit more.

Be sure to focus on the hip forward drive as you climb up the hill, keep the knees high along with shorter strides and more arm pumping.

Here are some suggested workouts. Alternate between longer hill repeats one week and shorter hill repeats the following week.

**Longer Hill Repeats**

5 min warmup

- Find a hill that takes at least 90 secs to go up at an uncomfortable pace
- Perform the 90sec uphill repeat 8 times. Walk back down for recovery (very important to get the full rest before starting again so you don’t injure yourself. Also, the walking downhill prevents the quads and knees from being overloaded which can also lead to injuries).

Cooldown for 5 min and stretch it out.
Short Hill Repeats

5 min warmup

- Find a hill that takes at least 60 secs to go up at an uncomfortable pace
- First set will be 4 reps of 15 secs hard up the hill
- Second set will be 3 reps of 30 secs hard up the hill
- Third set will be 2 reps of 45 secs hard up the hill

After each rep, make sure to walk back down for recovery (very important to get the full rest before starting again so you don’t injure yourself. Also, the walking downhill prevents the quads and knees from being overloaded which can also lead to injuries).

Cooldown for 5 min and stretch it out.
Running is a pretty simple sport that doesn’t require too much equipment. It’s that same reason that makes long distance running a dangerous sport—danger in the sense of chronic injuries to joints, back, feet, hips, etc.

**Spend the proper time at a local running specific store that will analyze your gait and put you in the proper shoes.**

*K-Tip: Every gait is different so don’t go for the shoes on sale, or for the cute pink ones cause everybody’s wearing them. If you’re serious about preventing injuries and enjoying your runs pain free, then I highly suggest buying a shoe that fits your feet and gait.*

Second to proper shoes are Foam Rollers! These will help breakdown adhesions that build up after every run. It’s those adhesions that often lead to injuries and joint issues. Try to incorporate at least 3 min everyday of foam rolling to keep muscles loose (especially IT band). If you’re looking for a video guide on the top 6 foam rolling exercises, be sure to check out my Ebook/video package here: [http://kendricksmethods.weebly.com/](http://kendricksmethods.weebly.com/)
3. False flats

What the heck are false flats? These are those roads that LOOK flat to the eye but your legs will quickly remind you that there is a slight change in incline (often 1-2% grade) as you’re climbing up it! These are great for doing longer hill sprints, but even better going down! They are great to build up strength for the quads—an area often weak for most runners. Weak quads = weak knees = knee injuries = no running. BLAH! Let’s avoid that.

Find a false flat around where you live and try to incorporate some fast downhill workouts. These will help you in developing faster leg turnover, proper running form at a faster pace, building strength in quads and knees. Downhills are also great for improving running form.

**K-Tip: Make sure it’s not a steep downhill otherwise you are defeating the purpose and loading too much weight on those knees which can lead to injuries.**

**Recommended Workout:**

- 10 min warm up
- 15 secs all out downhill (focus on proper form; hips forward, shoulders low, high knees and long kickback with the legs). Jog back up for recovery after each set.
- 30 secs all out
- 45 secs all out
• 60 secs all out
• 45 secs all out
• 30 secs all out
• 15 secs all out
• Repeat set one more time if you’re feeling good. Finish the workout with an easy 5 min jog and plenty of stretching.

Try to incorporate downhill sprints every other week in your training schedule.
4. Track workouts

It’s simple—you want to race faster; you’ve got to train fast! Track workouts are great way to condition the body in a way so that, on race day, it can simply feel like just another run.

Now, you’ll want to be careful when adding track workouts to your running program. Much as it can benefit you, it can also put you at a high risk of injury...so make sure, if you’re a beginner runner, to plug in about 2 months of steady running prior to going to the local track. Once the body is somewhat acclimated to how running feels, here is a good, 4 week intro build up on implementing track workouts to your running regimen:

Week 1: 6x 200 meters at 5k race pace. Finish with 400 meter at 5K pace. Focus on proper form and leg turnover. Stop to stretch if you need to. Rest 100 meters walk/jog in between intervals.

Week 2: 8x 200 meters at 5k race pace. Finish with 400 meters at 5K pace.

Week 3: 6x200 meters at 5k race pace. Finish with 2x400 meters at 5K pace (200 meter recovery in between 400 intervals).
Week 4: 8x200 meters at 5k race pace. Finish with 2x400 meters at 5K pace.

**Very important.** Always start every track workout with a 10 min warmup run, along with some track drills. Finish up with 3-5 min cooldown and plenty of static stretching.

*K-Tip: Execute each track interval with perfect form so you don’t fight your own body and use access energy elsewhere. Jaws relaxed, shoulders down, soft grip (like your holding potatoes chips), forward hip drive, high knees, long kickback....and when your fading towards the end of an interval—PUMP THE ARMS!*
One of the most unhealthy practices for both new and veteran runners is obsessing over running and making it a daily thing, everyday of the year. I have seen numerous people change their lives in a positive way with running, but have also witnessed the other side, the side where people become selfishly involved with the sport and everything they do requires working around his/her running schedule. Sometimes that can put a strain on relationships. It’s also a sure way to cause injury.

I’m a firm believer in quality over quantity training. Can you go 5, 6 and even 7 days of straight running? – Yes, but the risk for injury increases dramatically. Remember, running is a sport of repetitive movements and that constant load on the same joints without addressing proper hydration, rest, cross training and weight training results in injuries—that unfortunately, sometimes, can be chronic. You only have a limited number of healthy miles in you, so let’s make sure we can extend that for a long as possible.

*K-Tip: By keeping the running to a quality 4 days a week, you can dramatically increase your running health. I personally know many runners who have done really well on 3 days a week and I personally enjoy that approach even better, because it gives me plenty of rest in between the pounding and allows for more cross training, which leads to an overall stronger runner’s body.*
Other days can be (and should be) supplemented with other cardio/strength activities; swimming, biking or strength training for runners. The body has 3 major planar of motion; Sagittal, Frontal and Transverse planes. Running only happens along the Frontal Plane.

**By doing activities in different planar, you’re able to keep joints such as hips, knees and ankles strong, in order to run even more efficiently.**

Remember, the body gets strong by the progressive load, rest approach. More is not better. Instead, focus on quality over quantity and be sure to take 1-2 days completely off from physical activity in order to preserve the body and also keep the body and mind fresh and motivated. You don’t want to burn out, right?? 9 out of 10 Collegiate runners quit running after College for at least 2 years (myself included) and the reasons are often the same—burnout. Practicing twice a day, with cross training on the “Off Day”, leads to little rest for the physical, mental and emotional rejuvenation which is much needed in our sport.
Put in simple terms, dynamic stretching is stretching that requires movement. Static stretching is holding a stretch for 20-30 secs for each stretch. Static stretching is ideal (and needed) after a run—especially after hill and track workouts.

Dynamic stretching is extremely beneficial prior to a run, any run. It allows the running muscles to fire up properly and stretch in a form that will provide proper power and contraction for you during the run.

Numerous studies also show that dynamic stretching prevents injuries. In studies from Hokkaido University in Japan, scientists wanted to find out how dynamic stretching, static stretching, or no stretching differed in power output of leg muscles when participants participated in leg extension exercises. Their findings showed that those participants who did a series of dynamic stretching before doing
leg extension exercises showed significant increase in performance compared with static stretching, or no stretching at all.

Learn to incorporate dynamic stretching into your running regimens; 3-5 min is all you need prior to your run. Here are some stretches you can start doing:

- Side leg swings
- Forward leg swings
- Squat hold, release
- High knees
- Butt kicks
- Arm circles

**For more dynamic stretch ideas, check out this video:**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfBOz3iSrns
The water secret is the simplest and most effortless thing you can do for joint and muscle pain relief—it is rarely recommended for that use, and is avoided by all too many, yet it’s one of the easiest things to add to your training regimen and lifestyle, for that matter.

Water is much more that a thirst quencher. Joint lubrication, hydration and flexibility all suffer when you're not drinking enough water. Also, your level of pain is higher under these conditions.

Cartilage in the joint consists of 65–80% water. This vital fluid in ligaments, tendons and muscles serves very important functions in cushioning & lubricating joints and tissues, which leads to muscle staying a lot more elastic—key for runners.

Water also removes toxins inside cells and in tissue and joints, thus decreasing pain. In addition, the recovery phase after microscopic muscle tears (which usually happens after most runs; it’s that soreness you sometimes feel a couple days after a run/workout) needs to happen in an aqueous environment.
The chemical process that occurs in repairing the muscles and making them stronger also needs to take place in an aqueous environment.

**K-Tip: No need to obsess here! Like most things, keep it in moderation, because overdrinking water can actually flush out essential electrolytes in the body,... which are much needed for runners. Do make an effort though to bring along with you a water bottle anywhere you bring your phone.**

So, next time you see a glass of water, think of it as the magic potion to keeping your running in peak performance and your muscles, joint and tissue working kinetically the way it should, to avoid injuries.
8. Ice bath and Active Recovery Days

Ice baths are one of the best ways to decrease inflammation in the muscle tissues and speed up overall recovery.

In a recent study, published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, nine runners ran for half an hour at a steady pace (about threshold level), then did an interval workout. Afterwards, they put one leg ("to the level of their gluteal fold," as stated in the research) in an ice bath for 15 minutes and left the other leg out.

Researchers measured the physiological parameters in a group of runners in a post-run ice bath. They found that hemoglobin levels were lower and tissue oxygenation was higher in the leg that had been in the ice bath. These finding were consistent with other research concerned with reduced swelling in muscle tissues. Overall metabolic activity and decreased micro vascular perfusion were the result.

In another study, published in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, runners were put through two hard runs on three occasions: with a 15-minute ice bath at a temperature of 8 degrees Celsius (46 degrees Fahrenheit) between; with a 15-minute ice bath at a temperature of 15 degrees Celsius (59 degrees Fahrenheit)
between; and with a 15-minute rest between. When running as long as they could at just below max effort in the second run, the runners lasted the longest following the colder of the two ice baths, followed by the less-cold ice bath. When they did nothing between, their time to exhaustion was four and three minutes shorter, respectively, than when they had the ice baths. That’s significant!

So try it out after your next hard run. It’s really hard in the beginning, but you do get used to it 2 min into it. Aim for 5-10 min dipping underneath the water to hip region.

And while we’re in the topic of recovery, let’s touch on Active Recovery Days. What are ARD’s?

These are days that are scheduled (key word!) in your training program in which you use to:

- Stretch
- Ice
- Foam roll
- Massage

You may also choose to do all the above activities. Activities can range from beginning Yoga (or Yoga for Runners—which should focus on more stretching and less isometric holds) to Tai Chi to a nice relaxing massage.

K-Tip: The body doesn’t improve during hard sessions of track, hills or fast runs.... Remember, those all break down the body. It’s the combination of LOADING followed by RESTING and followed by PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD that leads to amazing results.

The rest is what connects the improvement chain, so be sure to take a day to simply perform some active recovery activities. They should not involve raising the heart rate too high, and you can keep it as short as 10 min if needed.

10 min of foam rolling will do wonders for your body by the way!
9. Pick up the TEMPO!

One of the best ways to improve your lactic threshold is with regular tempo runs.

Since your lactate threshold pace is the pace when lactate starts to build up in your muscles. Tempo runs are done at the same pace or slightly faster than your current lactic threshold pace.

Tempo runs are used to help lactate slowly build up in your bloodstream. If you’re running too slowly, then you won’t see the greatest benefits from the workout. You’re trying to spend as much time as possible at your lactate threshold to improve your pace for your next workout.

And just to clarify, your lactate threshold measures the pace that lactate - a byproduct of carbohydrate metabolism - will accumulate in your muscles, causing the start of muscle failure. It is basically that burning sensation in the muscle you get during those intense runs. This is a crucial element of long distance running training. Most people avoid tempo runs because initially they are a shock to the body and won’t feel as comfortable, but over time with consistent training, it does get easier.

When you pump up your exercise intensity significantly, you’ll improve your body’s ability to flush out lactate in order to keep up with more lactate production. In layman’s terms, you’ll be able to work out harder for longer period of time without your muscles tiring and you’ll most likely start enjoying your runs a lot more!
Tempo runs are normally done in smaller sets to build up your lactate threshold slowly so that you can hit your goal by race time. But make sure not to push yourself as hard as you would for a race. The point is to slowly build up so that you can improve your lactate threshold come race day.

**Ideas for training:**

Alternate between short and long tempo runs every week.

**Example: For someone training for a 5k:**

Week 1: Warm-up for 5-10 min, dynamic stretch and go hard to 1.5 miles at tempo pace. Take a complete rest (3-5 min of walking/jogging) and then repeat another 1.5 miles. Cool down and perform some static stretches to the major running muscles. (Long tempo week)

Week 2: Warm-up for 5-10 min, dynamic stretch and go hard for .75 miles at tempo pace. Take a complete rest (3-5 min of walking/jogging) and repeat set 2-3 times for a total of 3-4 sets. Cool down and perform some static stretches to the major running muscles. (Short tempo week)

*For someone training for a Half Marathon, it would look a little more like this:*

Week 1: Warm-up for 5-10 min, dynamic stretch and go hard for 3-4 miles at tempo pace. Take a complete rest (3-5 min of walking/jogging) and then repeat another 2-3 miles. Cool down and perform some static stretches to the major running muscles. (Long tempo week)

Week 2: Warm-up for 5-10 min, dynamic stretch and go hard for 2 miles at tempo pace. Take a complete rest (3-5 min of walking/jogging) and then repeat 2 more times for a total of 3 sets. Cool down and perform some static stretches to the major running muscles. (Short tempo week)
Why don’t you give an exact time for rest in between the set?

This goes back to getting to know your own body. Runners react differently to every interval set and to implement an ideal rest time for everyone would encourage those that can recover quicker to take too long of breaks and those that need a longer break to run tired. Remember, we want to make our runs top notch quality. Make every interval a quality interval. If you feel too tired that day, then take the day off. Listen to your body. Don’t obsess over the training schedule. You’ll have bad running days, but I guarantee you will also have excellent running days when you least expect it!
Last, but certainly not least—and incredibly effective—is strength training for runners. It strengthens major and minor muscles that support the big running joints (hips, knees and ankles). Strength training is the number one way to prevent injuries for runners.

Effective Strength Training for Runners must include:

Body Weight exercises that create a balance challenge in order to engage the synergist muscles that run along the hip, knee and ankle region.

Single sided exercises, loading one leg at a time (mimicking running, which is a constant shift in body weight from the left leg to the right leg).

Engaging the core, especially the muscles in the lower region of the abdomen area, since those are the ones that connect to the hip muscles which provide the leg lift during your stride.

Heavily focus on hip movement and mobility which, along with strengthening that area, also allows the body to engage the hip during your run instead of relying on your back and other joints.

Another big bonus to strength training for runners is that it taps into other energy systems within the body which require fat burning by the body ...thus leading to a stronger and leaner overall body. Now who doesn’t want that?

Sessions should not last more than 30 min per session, 1-2 times/week. Remember that this is a supplement to your running; you should not be pounding out strength exercises for hours on end. Training smart is the key and the process takes patience. The proper exercises, proper load, proper rest and proper progressive overload will lead to a much stronger YOU!

Want to join me, weekly, for a 20 min circuit training workout specifically designed for runners?

Go to: [http://www.studiokfit.com/tight-n-tone-online.html](http://www.studiokfit.com/tight-n-tone-online.html)
In order for the above tips to work, one must remember 3 things:

A.) **Nutrition:** Think nutrition, not diet. Runners expand an immense amount of energy. Be sure to include a balance nutrition game plan with protein along most meals, consume plenty of complex carbs (sweet potatoes, oatmeal, rice) and healthy fats (almond butter, avocado, nuts) The next Ebook will focus on the nutrition aspect a lot more, stay tuned via Facebook.

B.) **Sleep:** Believe it or not, the hormones release during sleep helps the body to recover and guess what? The more sleep you get, the more recovery hormones are released, the faster the body heals, the faster you’ll get stronger and faster. Rest is essential so take the time to getting the right amount of Zzzz’s everynight. It will change your running health, not to mention spike up your overall energy level and outlook on life!

C.) **ACTION:** Don’t let this short eBook simply be another Runner’s World magazine in which you read quickly and leave it to the side. This doesn’t happen via osmosis…it takes execution and ACTION! So start today with at least one modification to your training program. Take notes on things that work for you and those that don’t. Modify accordingly. Reread the eBook if needed. With time, along with persistency and consistency you will get stronger, fitter and faster! Keep moving!

There you have it, 10 tips that I hope you can implement into your running program. My goal is for you to get faster, avoid injuries and ultimately enjoy your running career even more. If you have questions please don’t hesitate to contact me. There’s lots of running related workouts, tips and motivation that happens everyday on my Facebook page. Be sure to follow it: ‘Kendrick Fitness’
Also for those looking to learn a little more, check out my Ebook ‘Upgrade your Running Lifestyle‘. Along with the eBook, you’ll get some great short videos covering dynamic stretch, strength/core training for runners, foam rolling for beginners, a 12 week Half Marathon schedule and some fat burning videos for those of you that want to shed those unwanted pounds. It’s all here:

http://kendrickmethods.weebly.com/

Keep training smart =)

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