

Why 5Ks Are Good for Us



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Whether you are an experienced runner or you have never participated in a 5K walk/run event, I encourage you to consider participating in the Travis Manion Foundation's 9/11 Heroes Run. The race is coming up in Doylestown on October 9th. These events are good for the body, mind, and spirit, as well as being good for the broader community by creating a shared sense of purpose and engagement. Whether you run, walk, jog, or push a stroller or a wheelchair, you can participate in these family-friendly events.

The exercise you get from a 5K run or walk is good for you because it is sustained aerobic activity. That means that the exercise gets your heart rate up and keeps it up for a prolonged period, which requires your body to use more oxygen. This kind of exercise has been shown to have benefits for your brain, improving pain, mood, and memory.

Your heart is a muscle and needs to be exercised in order to stay healthy and efficient. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week. Rather than exercising in isolation (like we had

to do at the start of the pandemic), it is sometimes more fun and motivating to exercise by walking or running with others, especially for a good cause.

Whether you plan to run, walk, or jog, you might want to make sure you can go this distance prior to the event, especially if you haven't run or walked much recently. Whenever you are beginning a new exercise or trying to push yourself to a new level of exercise, you want to avoid what's called a "training error." Training errors occur when an exercise's intensity, duration, or frequency is progressed too quickly—such as suddenly going for a much longer run or rapidly increasing the total distance you walk or run in a week. Training errors are the most common cause of overuse injuries associated with walking and running for exercise.

Guides such as a "couch to 5K" program are useful to progress the workload on your body in a safe, gradual manner. These programs, which can be found online, are designed to help someone who isn't active and progress them gradually to the point of walking or running 5 kilometers.

Another good way to minimize the risk of injury from walking or running for exercise is by performing strengthening exercises. Walking and running are good forms of full-body exercise, but walking or running by itself doesn't challenge certain muscle groups that are important for keeping your legs healthy and functioning at their best. For instance, the muscles on the sides of your hip are very important for stability when landing on one leg, which you do with

each step you take, but running does not target these muscles to make them grow stronger. This is why it is important to do some strength training, even for people who just like to walk for exercise.

Weakness in the hips can cause pain and injury around your hip, knee, or even ankle and foot. A simple hip-strengthening exercise for the hip abductors is to lie on your side and raise your leg up to the sky (without letting your toes point up to the sky). You might feel this burn on the side of your hip, which is normal. If you have good strength, you should be able to do this 25 times without much difficulty.

Another important muscle group for walking and running is your calf muscles, especially your plantar flexors. These are muscles in the back of your calf that

provide your main source of propulsion. A good way to strengthen this group is by doing a heel raise: you go up onto your toes (if you are able to, you should do this while standing on one foot), then hold this position, up on your tip-toes, then slowly lower yourself back down. If you do this exercise with your knees straight, you are working the bigger calf muscle, the gastrocnemius. If you bend your knees a little, you'll be working on the soleus, which is the small and deeper muscle underneath.

Some people believe that too much walking or running is bad for your joints or can cause arthritis, but numerous studies have shown evidence to suggest otherwise. In fact, walking and running for exercise can be beneficial for weight loss, and weight-

bearing exercise can actually be good for your bones and joints. What's important is that you have the proper strength and range of motion to move and support your body in the ways you want to move it.

If you are trying to get into an exercise routine or walk to improve your health and well-being but are running into pain or want guidance while you try to become more active, you might consider consulting a physical therapist. PTs are trained to appropriately progress exercise and assess the musculoskeletal system to find the causes of pain. We love to get people moving again!

Running and walking in a group can be both fun and powerful, good for the body and soul. Stop by our booth at the Heroes Run! We hope to see you there!



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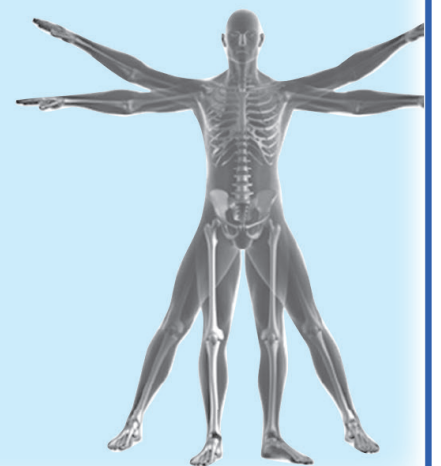
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