

About.com Running & Jogging

10 Reasons to Start Running

Runners Experience Many Benefits

By Christine Luff, About.com Guide Updated September 24, 2009

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People start running for a variety of reasons. Some run because they want to lose weight, improve their health, compete in races or try something new. Whatever your reason is for running, you'll experience many physical, mental and emotional benefits from the sport. Here are 10 great reasons to get started with running:

1. Running improves your health

One of the biggest benefits of running is that it's good for your health. Running is an excellent way to strengthen the heart and ensure the efficient flow of blood and oxygen throughout the body, which helps decrease your risk of a heart attack. Exercise, combined with maintaining a healthy weight, is one of the best ways to naturally reduce your blood pressure if it's above normal. If you have high cholesterol, running can also help keep it in check. Running also improves your immune system, so your body functions are more effective and efficient at fighting off germs. Running and other weight-bearing exercises increase bone density, which can fend off osteoporosis.

2. You can lose weight

Many people start running to lose some extra pounds. As one of the most vigorous exercises out there, running is an extremely efficient way to burn calories and lose weight. If you're already at a healthy weight, running can help you maintain it. Just make sure you don't think running gives you a license to eat anything you want. The basic rule of weight loss — that you must burn (through life functions and exercise) more calories than you take in — still applies to runners.

More:

[Running for Weight Loss](#)¹

[Smart Eating Rules for Runners](#)²

[Weight Loss Tips for Runners](#)³

3. You can run for a cause

Running can also be used as a way to contribute to society as a whole. Many races benefit charities, and some charities offer race training in exchange for fund-raising. Running for something that's bigger than you is a great way to stay motivated to keep training and can make your races even more meaningful and fulfilling.

More:

[Charity Running Groups](#)⁴

4. You can meet new people through running

Some runners enjoy the quiet and solitude of running on their own, but other runners see running time as social opportunities. Finding a running buddy or running with a group is a great way to develop a sense of community. You can set goals and accomplish them together. In addition, having a regular running buddy or running group is a great way to stay motivated to run.

Some runners also share advice and motivation with other runners in online forums, such as this [site's forum](#)

⁵. You can meet other people who share your obsession with running, celebrate your triumphs and help you overcome your obstacles.

5. You can experience something new and different

Running is a great way to expand your horizons and break away from the daily grind. The sport gives people the opportunity to explore areas of their own community or new locations, experience new physical sensations and run places they may not normally see.

More:

[Destination Marathons](#)⁹

[Where Should I Run?](#)¹⁰

[Get Out of Your Running Rut](#)¹¹

6. You can train for a specific goal

Some people hate to exercise just for the sake of exercising, but with running, though, you can train for races, from 5Ks to marathons and beyond. Training for a race gives you a specific goal to work toward, which can definitely help improve your motivation to run.

More:

[Beginner's Marathon Training Schedule](#)¹²

[Run Your First Marathon](#)¹³

[Get Over Your Racing Fears](#)¹⁴

7. Running improves your energy levels

When you're feeling sluggish or tired, running is a great way to boost your energy. Runners who run in the morning report that they have improved energy levels during the day. Combining running with a [healthful diet](#)¹⁵ will help improve your energy levels even more.

More:

[9 Ways to Get More Energy](#)¹⁶

8. Running will help you feel good about yourself

Regular runners report an increase in their confidence and self-esteem, and the self-esteem benefits of running are increased if you set a specific goal, such as running a marathon, and accomplish it.

9. Running is versatile and inexpensive

Running requires very little equipment, and it can be done almost anywhere. All you need is a [good pair of running shoes](#)¹⁷, and you can head out your door to go for a run. From city sidewalks to wooded trails, there are plenty of places for runners to explore — at no cost. If you travel a lot, it's easy to pack your running shoes and run while you're on the road.

More:

[Running While Traveling](#)¹⁸

[Money-Saving Tips for Runners](#)¹⁹

10. Running can help with stress relief

Running — as with many forms of exercise — is a great cure for stress, emotional strain and even mild depression. Research has shown that healthy adults who exercise regularly are generally happier than those who don't.

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