

## Running tips by Mike DeCinti

If you're ever driving in the neighborhoods of Tanglewood, Highland or the Oaks early in the morning and you see some idiot running in the middle of the road, don't hit him. That idiot is me, and I'm actually in the middle of the road for an important reason.

You see most roads are sloped to help with rain runoff and the slope is greatest at its sides. But running on the side of the road you are more likely to have foot, leg, knee and hip pain because not only will one leg be lower than the other, but your feet will not be hitting the ground flat. However, the closer you run to the middle of the road the more flat and even it is, and the better for you in the long run...and on long runs.

So if you have started to run for exercise, this is just one tip to help make sure you can continue to run for a long time. But as you can imagine, there are plenty more. In fact just do a web search or drop by a magazine stand or library, and you'll find more information that you can comprehend concerning proper running techniques. But to get you started here are a few more that I make sure to follow to help me in my running.

- Make sure you invest in a good pair of running shoes. In fact, this topic alone fills the pages of most of those running magazines I just mentioned. You want to make sure you figure out whether you have a low, medium or high arch and the rotation of your foot when you run. And don't be afraid to try on lots of shoes. I have the hardest time finding the right running shoe, but I will try out dozens of pairs before I settle on the right one. In fact I am a member of a company called Road Runner Sports and they will let you try a shoe for 30 days and return it if you decide you don't like it.
- Try to limit the amount of time you run on hard surfaces. Concrete is the worst surface to run on, so if you've been hitting the sidewalks, you need to rethink your route. Of course that may put you on the road and asphalt isn't much better. The best surfaces to run on would be a track. I try to spend a lot of time running at Lumberton High School's track. But there are others, both inside and out that may be best for you. If you can't get to a track, try running on grass, trails, or the beach. Of course each one of those brings concerns as well, such as unlevelled areas, possibility of rocks or limbs, and sometimes the surface can be too soft. The important thing is that you need to find areas to run that work for you, and whenever possible avoid hard or dangerous surfaces.
- Make sure you fuel your run. Most people don't eat the right foods or drink enough water before they plan a run. If you are starting to run distances over 4 or 5 miles, you need to start planning ahead for your run well before you begin. The longer the run the longer in advance you should be eating enough carbohydrates for the energy you'll need and drinking enough water so you don't begin to dehydrate during the run. It can get pretty complicated when you get into the science behind proper nutrition, but the basics are enough to get you started.

- Finally I want to stress the importance of warming up, cooling down and stretching. Now this used to be something I never paid much attention to, and I'm feeling the affects of it today. You may have heard that you should never stretch a cold muscle, and this is very true. So before your run, don't start to stretch unless you have properly warmed up your muscles. You can do this by walking for 5 minutes, or even starting a run at a very slow pace with the intention of stopping and stretching a mile in. You want to make sure you get a good stretch in both your lower (feet, legs, groin, hips) and upper body (back, arms, shoulders, neck.) Hold stretches for 10 to 15 seconds and move slowly without any swinging or bouncing. After you run, make sure you cool down, re-hydrate and stretch some more. Your muscles should be nice and loose right now, so it's the best time to make sure you recover well and prevent future injuries.

By the way, just as important as it was that you "fueled" up before the run, it's just as important that you re-fuel again after. Make sure that within 20-45 minutes after your workout, you eat some protein to build and repair your muscles, and some carbohydrates to re-energize your body for the rest of the day.

Mike DeCinti is the marketing director for Lumberton Radiological Associates. He can be reached at [mdecinti@lraxray.com](mailto:mdecinti@lraxray.com) or by calling 738-8222, ext. 258.