

## Health benefits of running and jogging

Regular running or jogging offers many health benefits. Running can:

- help to build strong bones, as it is a weight bearing exercise
- strengthen muscles
- improve cardiovascular fitness
- burn plenty of **kilojoules**
- help maintain a **healthy weight**.

An inactive lifestyle is associated with higher mortality, coronary artery disease, **hypertension** and **stroke**. It is also a primary cause of most chronic diseases, as the body rapidly adapts to insufficient physical activity which results in substantially reduced quality of life.

Regular physical activity such as running can significantly improve **mental health**, self-confidence, healthy ageing, and quality of life.

## Running and jogging for beginners

Some general tips for beginners:

- See your doctor for a check-up before you start a running program. This is especially important if you are over 40 years, are **overweight**, have a chronic illness or haven't exercised in a long time.
- Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you. Print a copy of the **pre-exercise screening tool** and discuss it with your doctor or exercise professional.
- Start with brisk walking. Aim for 30 minutes per session. Allow a minimum of 8 to 12 weeks to build up to regular running. Aim to increase your jogging time each session, and alternate between walking and jogging.
- Make sure you warm up and stretch thoroughly before you head out. Cool your body down with light stretches when you return.
- Make sure you have plenty of fluids and take a water bottle with you on your run. Try to drink plenty of **water** before, during and after any activity.
- Allow at least 2 complete rest days per week to avoid overtraining, which may cause **injury**. Consider other low impact activities, such as swimming, at least once each week.
- Plan your route. If possible, choose flat, grassy areas rather than hard or loose (such as sandy) surfaces to reduce the risk of injury.
- Avoid running near roads. This is especially important if you have a pre-existing condition such as **asthma**. Vehicle exhaust fumes can increase your risk of various cardiovascular and respiratory complaints or illnesses.