

Weight training for runners

Weight training is a tried and true way to combat the potential damage to joints and tendons caused by running. A weight training regimen for runners, or anyone else wanting to strengthen while remaining lean, consists of multiple repetitions. Each exercise will consist of several repetitions in a set of specific exercises. For instance, when you do your leg press sets, you may have 3 sets of 10 reps. This means you'll do 10 leg presses, rest for a couple of minutes, do 10 more, rest again, and so on, until you've completed the 3 sets. At first glance, 30 reps on the leg press machine sounds like a lot, but it is important to understand that the more repetitions you do, the less weight you'll be lifting. Comparatively, a bodybuilder or power lifter trying to bulk up would do 3 sets of perhaps only 2 or 3 reps, and all with a very heavy weight.

As with any new training regimen, moderation is the key. Weight training 2-3 days per week is plenty for starting out. Strength training for the runner can be divided into three time periods—pre-season, in-season and post-season. During these blocks of time, the volume and number of sets performed changes to keep pace with the different seasonal demands that running presents.

Three Seasons for Weight Training:

Pre-Season: Mid January to Mid April (Increase Strength)

Do 3 sets w/5-6 reps per set.

Do 2 to 3 times per week

Last rep should feel as if you couldn't do another.

Too easy, add 5-10% more weight

In Season: Mid April to Mid October

Do 1-2 sets w/8-10 reps per set

Do 1 to 2 times per week

Post Season: Mid October to Mid January

First 4 weeks-Recovery

Do 1 set w/8-12 reps

Do 2 times per week

After 4 weeks, then do 2-3 sets w/8-12 reps

Sample Exercise Routine:

1. Warm up: This is crucial. Always begin by doing some type of light aerobic exercises to quicken your pulse and loosen your muscles before using the weights. This can be done by spending 10-15 minutes on a stationary bicycle, treadmill, or by taking a light jog around a track. Once you start to break a sweat, you're warmed up enough. Never skip this step. Nothing spells injury faster than weightlifting cold.

2. Upper and Lower Body Training: These include bench press, shoulder press, lateral pull downs, and curls for the upper body; leg press, leg curls, and calf lifts for the lower body. Start with a low weight: something you can easily lift without much effort. If your muscles aren't the least bit tired at the end of the first set, slightly increase the weight for the second set. At the end of each set, your muscles should feel warm and slightly tired, but never fatigued or burning. If it starts to hurt, you're probably doing too much too soon. There are a couple of options on how to do your sets. Traditionally, you'll do all 3 sets on one machine, and then move on to the next. But if a gym is crowded or you just want some variety, you can go through one set on each machine, and then come back through for the second and third sets, respectively.

3. Cool down: It's just as important as the warm up. If you're quite winded and sweating from your exercises, you'll need a cool down period before you stretch. This just means walking around a bit or jogging to stay warm, allowing your pulse to slow down.

4. Stretching: Always stretch completely after each workout. This will insure flexibility, help prevent injuries and increase your running efficiency. Take your time, and stretch everything from your neck to your toes, giving each stretch a 30-second count.