

Huddle with H2 Health: Injury Prevention and Recovery

By John Kovacs, H2Health Representative

If I could have your attention for a couple of minutes, I would like to quickly talk to you about some components of preventative care and how to keep from getting sore after the run you just finished. Let's discuss 3 components:

1. Heat and Ice
2. Flexibility
3. Strengthening

Heating and Icing. Heat would be a benefit before your run or activity to help loosen up a stiff joint or muscle. Warm muscles move and stretch more efficiently than cold. The common phrase “warm-up” means exactly that – you’ll want to get warm and loosened up. If you have any swelling, do not use heat because that increases the blood flow in that location. Ice is a good anti-inflammatory and would be good to use following a run or after an injury. It will help reduce inflammation and pain. So, remember to warm up and cool down. You would do both for about 10-15 minutes.

Flexibility. This is vital for increasing and maintaining your range of motion (ROM), as well as ensuring proper running mechanics. This will help to reduce repetitive stress and strain on the restricted tissues. Flexibility can be achieved in multiple ways, with static or dynamic stretching, use of foam rollers, getting massages, or receiving instrument assisted soft tissue treatment such as ASTYM (*an instrumented assisted device that assists with restoring some of those muscle imbalances*). It is important to stretch before and after your run for muscle recovery, as well as maintain and improve ROM/flexibility to decrease risk of injury.

Strengthening. Runners need appropriate musculature control to be able to accelerate, decelerate, and stabilize our center of gravity (COG) over our base of support (BOS). So what is the foundation for that control? It all begins at the core and hips. Now, I am not talking about going out and getting a 6 pack, (which would be our rectus abdominis) but I am talking about training your transversus abdominis. This muscle is one of your deeper abdominal muscles that provide the majority of your spinal stabilization during movement. This stabilization is critical regardless of the direction of movement. This is why, when you are training this muscle, you need multi-directional strength. Running tends to be in one plane of motion (mainly the sagittal plane). This will result in greater strengthening of muscles designed to help you move in this sagittal plane. By not training muscles that control and stabilize in other planes of movement (frontal and transfer plane), you are creating muscle imbalances that will increase your risk of injury. So, it is vital to perform multidirectional strengthening.

So, to put it all together, let's review some simple tricks we talked about – remember to warm up before exercise and cool down afterwards, be sure to take the time to stretch and improve your flexibility, and be sure to strengthen your transversus abdominis and hips in different plans of motion to prevent muscle imbalance. At H2 HEALTH, yes, we can provide ASTYM for recovery. However, as you now know, that is only one component in injury prevention. I encourage those who are managing an injury, or are interested in learning specific exercises and activities to maintain an active, injury free lifestyle, to call or stop by one of our locations. We can perform a complimentary assessment or a more thorough, comprehensive evaluation to determine the best course of treatment.

