

Running: Starting with the Basics

The first Amway River Bank Run training run at the David D. Hunting YMCA in downtown Grand Rapids takes place on December 1. I am sure we will see many familiar faces there, but there will also be others who have decided to train for their first race. They may be nervous and uncertain about how to progress toward their goal. We will be discussing this as they start their running journey.

The first and most important step is to decide on a goal. Whether it is preparing for a race, exercising for weight loss or running just to get healthy, it is vital to set an endpoint. If your goal is a race, decide on the length of the race and give yourself enough time to train and condition. Also, make sure the objective is obtainable. For example, it is not a good idea for a novice runner to begin training for a 25K a month before race day.

Running is a commitment so it is important to stick to your training. The Amway River Bank Run website has an excellent outline for conditioning/training programs for the 25K, 10K, 5K runs as well as the 5K walk. The training schedules can be found here: <https://amwayriverbankrun.com/training-resources/training-schedules/>. The schedules are tailored to beginners, runners with experience and expert runners. If you are having trouble committing to a program, create a schedule and post it in your home so that you can monitor your progress. Or find a running partner/group that can hold you accountable.

Running does not require a lot of expensive equipment. It is one of the cheapest ways to exercise. The biggest investment is the proper shoe. I have had many patients ask which shoe is best for them. Recommending a certain brand is difficult, however, as shoes are a not a one-size-fits-all discussion. Many running stores will let you try on shoes *and* be evaluated while you run in them. You will then get a recommendation based on your stride and foot anatomy. This is a great option for the beginning runner. I recommend trying on many different kinds - not just a recommended shoe. Whatever feels the most comfortable is the shoe you should purchase. It is also important to remember that you should replace your shoes every 300-500 miles (stick with the same brand and size) as the shoes tend to break down.

Proper hydration is also vital for success. I outlined the importance of fluid intake in a previous article. Basically, if you are running for a period of an hour or less, drink according to your thirst during your run. If you are running for more than an hour, add in electrolytes/nutrients as your body will need these to maintain optimal function and energy. You can easily do this with small amounts of sports drinks, gels or gummies.

Most importantly, listen to your body. If aches or pains develop during your training, it is okay to take a few days off to allow for healing. If your pain continues, it should be evaluated so you can correct and rehabilitate the injury. If you are having any lingering injuries or pain, do not hesitate to reach out to one of our sports medicine physicians at Spectrum Health Orthopedics at (616)267-8860. More information about our orthopedic program and providers is available on our website at <https://www.spectrumhealth.org/patient-care/orthopedics>.