

THE COMPLETE RUNNING GUIDE FOR MOMS

Everything you need to know about *running* safely and effectively.



MOMS into
FITNESS

Running is great. It requires no equipment or gym membership. All you need is a good (sometimes new!) pair of running shoes and time. It's quick, releases endorphins, aids in weight loss, and is so good for the heart. But running needs to be combined with cross training and proper nutrition to be an effective tool.

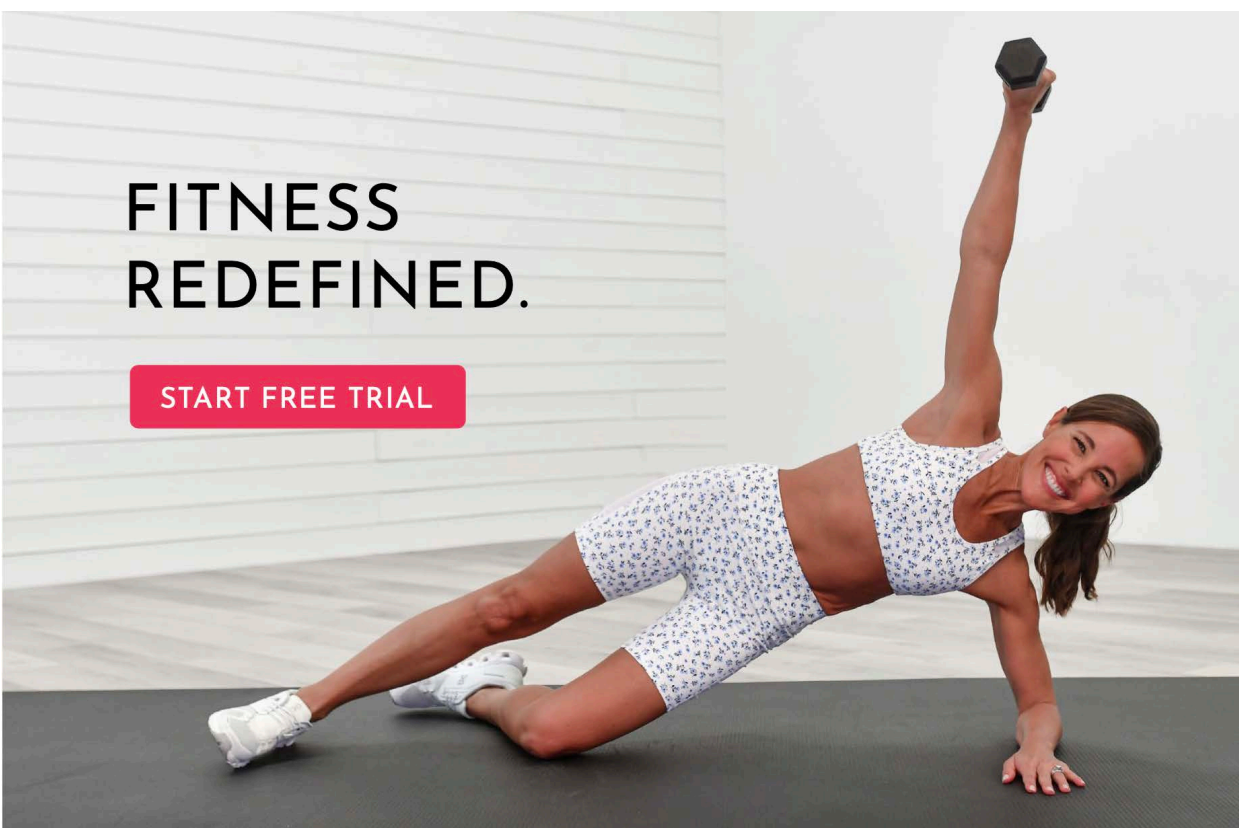
THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTH AND FLEXIBILITY

You need to have a workout regimen with equal parts flexibility, strength, and running. Why? Runners who stretch and strength train not only reduce their risk of injury, but also improve their performance. You don't need to run every day—try to incorporate cross training with HIIT workouts, strength days and, of course, days off.

Flexibility gives your body the length and range of motion to be able to move more freely, stride longer, and prevent bad stride habits that can lead to injury. If you haven't already, grab a foam roller! Before you start or after you finish a run—or any type of workout—be sure to stretch and foam roll. Both stretching and foam rolling prepare your body for loading and movement. Foam rolling is a type of myofascial release. As you release and realign the fascial system, you allow your muscles to function in a balanced system. Research is 50/50 on foam rolling prior to running ... my advice is try it and see if it works for your body!

Strength training gives your body the resilience it needs to withstand the immense stress running puts on your body. It is also proven to improve time to exhaustion and your overall speed. Your core/trunk is a transfer station for everything that goes on in the body. Running dramatically increases the amount of force through the core, pelvic floor, and legs. We are going to cover some pelvic floor and core stabilization exercises that help support your body during running.

For a complete workout regimen with all of these elements, look to our **Runners Program**. It's designed to awaken the athlete within you—giving you the strength, flexibility, and speed you need to improve your running performance, jumpstart weight loss, or just feel great about yourself.



**FITNESS
REDEFINED.**

START FREE TRIAL

INJURY PREVENTION

Too often, though, runners forego strength and flexibility, focusing solely on mileage and pace. This leads to overuse injuries. Common injuries like plantar fasciitis, shin splints, and IT band syndrome can put you on the bench for weeks, and sometimes months. If you don't take preventative measures—namely focusing on flexibility and strength training—then you're placing yourself at a high risk of developing an overuse injury. So how do you prevent running injuries? Check out this article on [injury prevention](#).

RUNNING AND YOUR CORE

CORE STABILIZATION AND THE TRANSVERSE ABS

Your core/trunk is a transfer station for everything that goes on in the body. Running dramatically increases the amount of force through the core, pelvic floor, and legs. If you don't have a healthy core, you are likely compensating elsewhere, which can lead to structural issues like knee pain, IT band pain, plantar fasciitis, low back pain, and hip flexor issues, just to name a few.

We need to train all four of our abdominal muscles (transverse abdominis, rectus abdominis, internal and external oblique), but the transverse abdominis is essential. The transverse abdominis (TA) runs horizontally across the front of the abdomen and acts like a corset. The main job of the TA is to stabilize the spine and pelvis before you move your arms or legs. These guys need to work all day, every day. Every time you take a step, climb a stair, reach overhead, cough or laugh so hard you cry, these lovely little muscles are kicking in. We can selectively strengthen the TA. Here are some TA exercises to try.



WATCH CORE FOR RUNNERS IN THE STUDIO

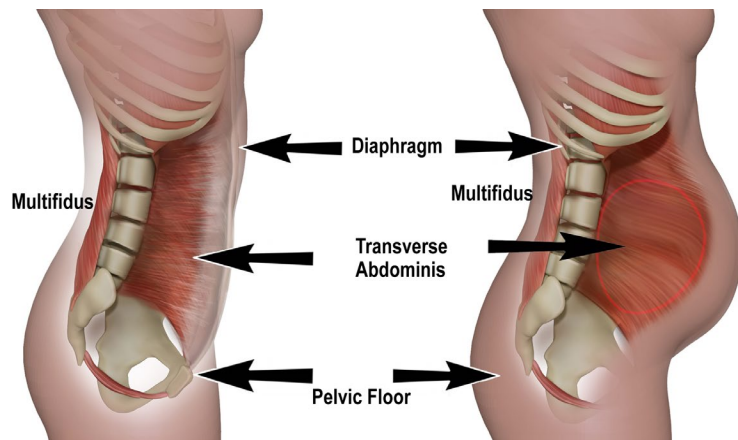
The core is such an important part of running. But of course, a comprehensive strength program is best! Running is spent in one plane of motion so it's important to train your abdominal cage, glutes, and legs in different planes of motion. We've got you covered in the [Moms Into Fitness Studio](#).

PELVIC FLOOR

The pelvic floor (PF) is the bottom of your core. This somewhat elastic, sling-like system can stretch out and lose resistance during pregnancy and labor. Think of it as a hammock that holds your bladder and reproductive organs in and attaches to the front and back of your pelvis. These muscles work all day long. 24/7. They work in conjunction with the TA to stabilize the core. Any insufficiencies in these muscles can cause pain, incontinence, and altered movement.

A study by Poświata in 2014 found that 45.54% of the 112 elite female endurance athletes (runners and cross-country skiers) polled suffered from incontinence. It is so common ladies! You are not alone!

Researchers also determined that running and high-impact aerobics were the most identified sources of the incontinence. As a result, high-impact aerobics became the single most abandoned type of exercise once women had experienced loss of urinary control. These muscles can be trained! *In order to strengthen any muscle you have to load*



it—that means that you have to work it beyond the point of its previous condition.

Also, one last bit of research. Neumann and Gill conducted a study showing that maximum pelvic floor muscle contractions cannot happen without a simultaneous contraction of the abdominal muscles, especially the transverse abdominis and internal obliques. Now you can see just how important the PF and TA are to your running patterns!

Incorporate these daily pelvic floor exercises.

Kegel exercises, like hold 'ems, have been shown to support proper pelvic alignment; prevent prolapse of the bladder, uterus, and rectum; realign the pelvis; support sphincter control; improve circulation to the pelvic floor muscles; and establish a healthy environment for healing.

The Kegel exercise is one of the best ways to identify and isolate these muscles. Remember that in order to strengthen any muscle you have to load it—that means that you have to work it beyond the point of its previous condition.

Pelvic floor education is so important! More than fits in this guide. **Watch our 5-video Pelvic Education series** with Rachel, DPT and pelvic floor specialist. If you are experiencing pelvic pain, don't push through. You might need to modify your workouts and/or see a doctor or physical therapist. If you haven't already, incorporate core stability exercises into your routine.

PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Hold Em's

1. Squeeze and lift the pelvic floor muscles by thinking of pulling on both ends of that hammock I talked about. You can also think about using the muscles that you use to stop the flow of urine or hold in gas.
2. Hold for 5–10 seconds (**you should be able to talk while you do these so you don't hold your breath**). And relax for 10 seconds. It is just as important to learn how to relax these muscles as it is to turn them on, so don't skip that step!
3. Do 10 contractions. Try to get in about 4–5 sessions of these puppies a day.

Quick Squeezes

1. Now contract those same muscles quickly 5 times. Don't hold. We're training motor control here ... fancy term for retraining that brain to turn them on/off quickly. Relax for 10 seconds after your fifth quick contraction.
2. Repeat 10 times.

CREATE A RUNNING PLAN

NEW RUNNERS

The best way to start is by running 5 minutes away from your home. Then walk or run (or both) to return to your home. Each week increase by one minute increments until you can run 10 minutes away and 10 minutes back home.

- Alternate your runs with our [strength and flexibility](#) workouts.

RUN FOR 5K/HALF MARATHON

We've got a great program that incorporates everything you need — strength, flexibility, and endurance training.

- [Get the 5K Training Calendar](#)
- [Get the 10K Training Calendar](#)

RUN FOR WEIGHT LOSS

You want to add running to your routine — it's quick, intense, and burns a lot of calories. But to be an effective weight loss tool, running needs to be combined with cross training and proper nutrition. In our [Runners Program](#), we incorporate cross training by adding two strength days and stretching, alongside two or three days of running.



RUNNER'S NUTRITION

You may have the right shoes, the core strength, and a cross-training routine, but you also need to fuel your best to feel your best. A runner's diet is extremely important, whether you are running 3 or 13 miles.

Our registered dietitian writes new articles every month—be sure to [sign up for our newsletter](#) to get this great info! Below are five of her running-specific articles.



RUNNER'S DIET

If you are doing lower mileage (2–4 miles) then you don't need to change the composition of your diet, but possibly the timing of your meals. If you are training for a race, this is a must read! You will also find nutrition guidance for running while pregnant or breastfeeding. [Read More.](#)



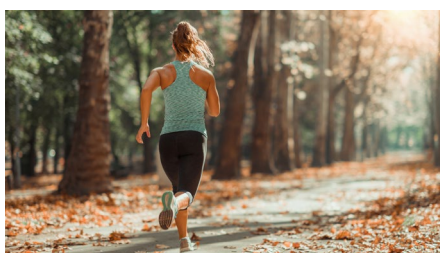
FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTH TRAINING TO PREVENT RUNNING INJURIES

Running doesn't have to lead to injuries. Learn tips to prevent plantar fasciitis, shin splints, and IT band syndrome. [Read More.](#)



DO I NEED A FITNESS TRACKER?

Is “closing your rings” on the Apple Watch becoming an obsession? Is it more important to listen to your body instead of your fitness tracker? Our registered dietitian dives into the research so you can determine what is best for you. [Read More.](#)



HOW BEING OUTSIDE BENEFITS YOUR OVERALL HEALTH

Running outdoors in the elements (wind, hills, fresh air) provides many benefits. It's a wonderful component to your physical and mental health. [Read More.](#)



HYDRATION BASICS

If you begin a run or workout dehydrated, you will not be able to make up for it during your workout, which can impact how hard you can push or the mileage you can cover. Beyond the “why,” we cover when and how much water you need to take in. [Read More.](#)

RUNNING DURING PREGNANCY & POSTPARTUM

POSTNATAL RUNNING

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a woman may resume her exercise routine gradually as soon as it is physically and medically safe, a circumstance that will vary from one person to another. Some women can delve back into a routine within days of delivery—with your doctor's permission of course! No published studies suggest that adverse effects will occur in healthy women who pick up physical activity quickly after birth, though those who have slowed or stopped training should resume exercise gradually. [ACOG CO 804]

Muscles need training in order to do what an individual wants them to do. After pregnancy, women must perform exercises specifically designed to get the pelvic floor and core strong. Remember: the pelvic floor includes a network of tissues, ligaments, and muscles that act as a sling, extending from the public bone to the base of the spine, to bear the weight of the baby during pregnancy. Midline episiotomies during vaginal births, especially at the 4th degree (the largest incision), can impede the function of these core muscles, too. The use of vacuums and forceps in the delivery of the baby also disturb the integrity.

By following a routine of rotation, balance, and stabilization exercises designed specifically to strengthen and tighten your core muscles, you will find success in running!

It's simply stunning if you think about it—the body's ability to recompose itself, to regain structure and shape, after creating a human life. The uterus shrinks at the rate of a finger width every day after pregnancy. This means that within six weeks, the uterus will resume its pre-pregnancy size. You can increase the speed and efficiency of your body's recovery, however, by learning to engage the inner core during daily activities and exercise.

Starting running too soon can wreak havoc on your pelvic floor. Its primary job is to keep that baby in and then afterwards to keep your insides ... well ... in. You never want to subtract to add—in other words, don't put your pelvic floor at risk to start adding miles. Follow the progression below to work your way back into running, spending 2–3 weeks at each stage. If you have good core strength and stabilization, you can progress more rapidly. Make sure you properly warm up (walking) and cool down (walking and stretching).



RUNNING WITH DIASTASIS RECTI

Megan Hoover, DPT, answered this question for us during the **Moms Into Fitness Instructor Training**.

This is a question I often get asked by ladies after having their babies. In my idealistic physical therapy world, the answer would be no, you shouldn't run with **diastasis recti**. Now, before you completely write me off ... please keep reading.

While my easy answer is no, I understand that runners are a unique and wonderful group and are very driven to return to their sport. I also know that most runners are going to return to running regardless. Trust me, I know ... I am one of you. My hope is that we can help you run with less impact on your diastasis recti and help you understand why running may slow your progress of reducing your diastasis and can impact your pelvic floor. Regardless if you had your baby/babies via vaginal delivery or C-section, your pelvic floor was impacted.

Diastasis recti abdominis (DR) is a condition in which the rectus abdominis muscle separates or thins along the middle of the muscle at the linea alba. It can be mild to severe. DR dramatically impacts the stability and integrity of your core muscles.



Let's talk about the deeper abdominals or the transverse abdominis (TA). Pay attention my running mommas. **This is where we talk about you successfully returning to running without making your DR worse.** Your TA fibers run horizontally and act as the corset of your core. As your TA gets stronger, your DR gets better.

Next in ... your pelvic floor. As you read previously, running dramatically increases the amount of force through the core, pelvic floor and legs. If you have DR, your structural integrity is already compromised. When running with DR, you are likely compensating, which can lead to other structural issues including, knee pain, IT band pain, plantar fasciitis, low back pain, and hip flexor issues, just to name a few. Not to mention increased strain through your pelvic floor. We need to address your compensations to insure you can run with proper alignment, so you can successfully return to one of your loves. It can be very difficult to know how you are compensating. Getting the help of a physical therapist who is educated in working with postpartum mommas will be so helpful, if not essential to your success.

Give the exercises in this **diastasis program** a shot to get those deeper core muscles activating accurately and safely! With that being said ... core stability and strength take time and consistency. I find that it takes about 4–6 weeks of performing these exercises about 4–5 times/week to see a measurable change. Most of you will be running in conjunction with these exercises. If you are going to continue to run with a DR, please do these exercises!

RUNNING DURING PREGNANCY

If you were a runner prior to getting pregnant, you can continue to run as long as you adjust your runs over time and as your belly gets bigger. If you didn't run before you got pregnant, now is not the time to start a running routine.

10 TIPS TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR BABY SAFE WHEN RUNNING WHILE PREGNANT:

1. An hour before exercise, eat a snack with complex carbs, protein, and a little fat. Drink about eight ounces of water for every 15 minutes of exercise.
2. You need to stop exercising and seek medical attention if any of the following occur: vaginal bleeding, regular painful contractions, amniotic fluid leakage, difficulty breathing before starting exercise, dizziness, headache, chest pain, muscle weakness, and calf pain or swelling. Overall listen to your body! Read all of our [pregnancy exercise guidelines](#).
3. Measuring exertion through the talk test is one of the easiest ways to determine what's too much and what's too little. As long as you can carry on a conversation while running, you are likely in the sweet spot and not overexerting yourself. Gauge your level of intensity by using [Rate of Perceived Exertion](#).
4. Avoid hot and humid environments. If you exercise more than 45–50 minutes, please check out the [Fit Pregnancy](#) suggestions.
5. Strength training and stretching are important components of running—keeping muscles pliable and strong, which helps prevent injury. Use our [pregnancy workouts](#) as a supplement to your running routine.
6. Running is an aerobic exercise, which can be done every day if you were running every day prior to becoming pregnant. Aerobic, otherwise known as cardiovascular exercise, is designed to improve the level of fitness of your heart, lungs, and the circulatory system. The benefits of cardiovascular exercises are still present 6–12 months after birth. This is why we see some professional runners with better race times after pregnancy.
7. It's usually pelvic pressure and comfort levels that keep you from running later in pregnancy. You can use a belly band for comfort. But know when you should not exercise through pelvic pain.
8. Don't forget the deep muscles of the pelvis and core. The pelvic floor is the bottom of your core, affected by simply being pregnant. To keep your core healthy during pregnancy, you should incorporate [transverse abdominis](#) and [pelvic floor exercises](#). Don't be embarrassed about urinary incontinence—otherwise known as peeing your pants. It is so common ladies! We are not alone! Do your PF exercises.
9. Be aware of the gradual change in your center of gravity. Later in your pregnancy, this can lead to a change in balance, so some doctors will recommend you run outside instead of using a treadmill. As always, listen to your body. If you are tired and feeling clumsy, skip running so you can eliminate any possible trauma to your belly.
10. Trimester adaptations:

During the first trimester—Feelings of fatigue and nausea make you want to hug your pillow. But if you have other little ones running around, you know that you have to find some energy somewhere. And just 10–15 minutes of exercise can help boost your energy.

During the second trimester—Partway through the second trimester, your cardiac output is up 30–40% above pre-pregnancy levels. So what does this mean? More blood = more oxygen to the muscles = more endurance. Does that mean go run a marathon? No, but it does mean during the second trimester you might be able to do more. Although you should never get to the point of fatigue or exhaustion.

During the third trimester—Relaxin, the hormone that lets your pelvis and ribcage expand to fit your baby, has also created loose joint stability. This creates more flexibility, but it also creates an environment for injury if you are not careful. All the postural changes are probably altering your sense of balance. You tend to “waddle” as you walk. This is because your gait (the way you move) is changing to adapt to the extra 20–35 lbs.