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Running: Pre's Trail and Beyond

People in the USA who wish to maintain fitness, prevent doctor bills, and live an active and meaningful life are caught between many rocks and many hard places brought on by conflicting statements about what is good for you, what you can do (or not do) and what you should eat (or not eat), etc. The purpose of my new Running & Health Newsletter (I told you about it last week) is to bring some logic and understanding from all these conflicting signals we hear about running and/or jogging and health maintenance.

For instance, last Wednesday's Associated Press News budget carried a Seattle dateline story quoting a podiatrist in Seattle recommending "moderation" for joggers/runners. Dr. Stan Newell, the podiatrist (foot doctor, so-called) said, "You can get hurt faster and more frequently running than any other recreation." Newell, self-described as an on-and-off-again runner, says that 15 to 25 miles per week is reasonable but after that there is a definite risk. He then made comparison between

pro football and basketball stars and athletes taking part in the 1980 U.S. Olympic Trials in Eugene in 1980. His general summary was this: "Take ten runners, if they run 40 to 50 miles a week, 50 percent of them have trouble. The less mileage, the percentage of injuries goes down. I would say less than ten percent would have trouble if they were running 15 miles a week."

Now, I realize Dr. Newell may make a statistical point to support his statement, but it seems to me it is not so much *how much* you run but *in what manner* you run, whether you have trained, what kind of shoes you run in, what kind of surface you are running on, your own particular body situation (weight, etc.) and how fast you run, among other factors. The December issue of *Runner's World* touches on all these issues in a major feature article titled "Ten Years of Sports Medicine." Interviews with ten doctors (podiatrists and other specialists) featured views on the subject of running and staying healthy and effective while running.

One of the *Runner's World* doctors, in commenting about knee disabilities, touched on important aspects of factors which affect runner/jogger foot, leg and knee problems and how they might be avoided. "Often the onset of knee and other problems are related to errors in training or significant changes in training. These include: 1) changing shoes; 2) suddenly in-



cluding hills in a workout routine; 3) rapidly increasing the intensity of interval work; 4) sudden increases in weekly mileage or one unusually long run; 5) altering the running surfaces or the slope of these surfaces; 6) rapidly returning to previous mileage levels after a prolonged illness or vacation; and 7) trying to run through pain.

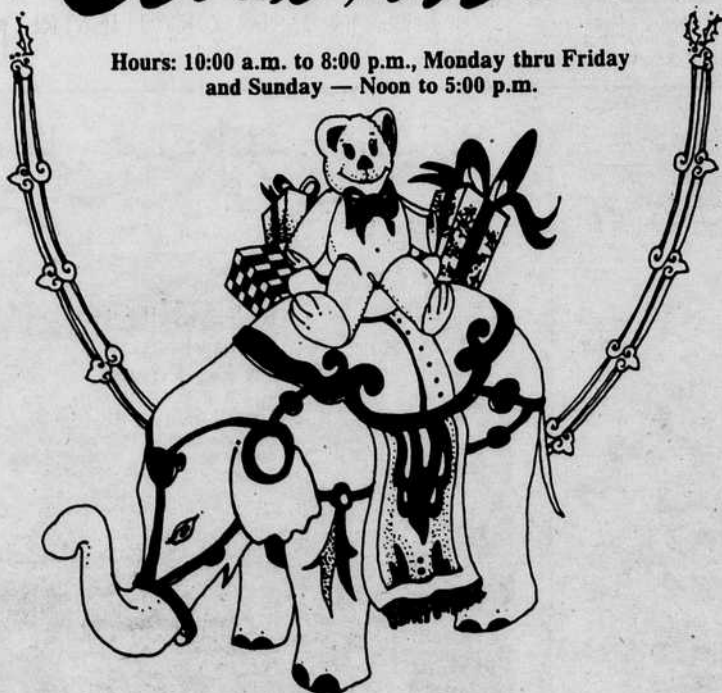
It is amazing what a good analysis the above provides (in the way of a thumbnail sketch) of how you might provide yourself with foot and leg health. There is really no reason to have foot or leg health problems if reasonable precautions are taken in your regular running or jogging routines. Much of the Sportsmedicine advice is just good common sense. Unfortunately, the first rule in running is becoming aware of your body and how to treat it. Regular runners probably know more about nutrition and bodily fitness and health than any other athlete or exerciser.

(Jack Craig, a daily runner now for seven years, is starting the publication of a regular newsletter as an extension of this column. Send a stamp or 50¢ for mailing and he'll return an information sheet to you about his newsletter. Pre's Trail & Beyond, P.O. Box 1211, Eugene, OR 97440.)

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