

Gear Check

If you have completed No Boundaries or WalkFIT training program in the past, this information will be a good review for you. For those of you who are new to our training programs, these are our gear essentials. This week we are going to cover the basic gear needed to make the most of your runs and walks. Once fit is achieved, performance will follow.

We will start with your foundation: your feet. Feet provide the basic support for your entire body, much like the foundation of a home. If they are out of alignment, there will be excessive pressure on several joints in your body, such as your ankles, shins, knees, and hips. Your shoes don't have to be fancy or expensive, but it is important that they are the right pair for you. The three-year-old pair that have been sitting in the back of your closet simply will not do, you need a fresh, well-fitted shoe. Running shoes are made for the purpose of protecting your feet and legs from the repeated stress of running, and wearing the proper shoe will help aid in injury prevention. One of the greatest things about running is how little equipment is needed to get started. All you really need to get going is a good pair of properly fitted running shoes.

Of course, there are other items that will make your fitness experience even better. So, repeat after me, "Cotton is rotten." This applies socks as well as apparel, but let's start with socks, an often overlooked piece of running equipment. A lousy pair of socks can make a great pair of shoes feel awful. The main advantages of technical fiber socks are they wick away sweat from your feet, dry quickly, and retain their shape, softness, and resiliency. Also, some technical socks provide extra padding which in turn will provide some extra cushion. This is especially important as you age because the fatty pads on the bottoms of your feet will begin wear thin.

The mantra "cotton is rotten" should also be applied to all the rest of your running clothing (shirts, shorts, pants, etc.). While we all know that nothing is more comfy than a cotton t-shirt, when it gets wet, cotton becomes heavy, clingy, and can cause chafing. Cotton can also hinder your body's temperature control efforts. Wet cotton clothing clings to your body in the summer, making you feel hotter. In the winter, those wet cotton clothes not only feel really cold against your skin, but they can also freeze and become even more uncomfortable. You want to be as comfortable as possible on your runs, so try a moisture wicking top and bottom designed to help sweat evaporate quickly, leaving your skin dry. Technical clothing is made from synthetics which are soft and non-abrasive. Technical running shirts are available with a ventilating mesh or tightly woven fabric. Running shorts are typically a nylon mix and are soft, light weight, and fast drying. Usually they have some kind of lining (usually a thin liner or spandex bike short). In the winter, many people wear technical running tights which are a spandex blend to help keep your legs and leg muscles warm. There are also several looser fitting pant options. When it comes to choosing your technical running clothing, go with what feels most comfortable to you.

To complete your workout attire you'll want to have a hat, a visor, and/or a pair of sunglasses. It's not just to protect your eyes from the glare of the sun or to save your skin from wrinkles (though those are nice bonuses). When the sun is shining brightly, many people tilt their heads

forward to avoid a glare directly in their eyes. Running in this position creates extra strain in the neck and upper back. Looking down at the ground is more likely to leave you feeling down. When you wear a hat, a visor, or sunglasses, you keep your chin up, literally and figuratively.