



YOUR FEET

Podiatrist and Athlete Clinton Schembri Francalanza joins CORSA to offer advice to our runners on essential foot care.

‘How do I know what running shoe is right for me?’

Shoes come in a large number of different shapes, sizes, technologies and colours; so do our feet. The best way to go about buying your best shoes is a mix of great professional advice from your trusted Podiatrist along with good knowledge from your preferred shoe shop as to options available for your intended run. Over and above that, the shoe should also fit the race and terrain. So, a road race would require road shoes whilst a trail one would require a totally different shoe.

These are some tips and tricks which always come handy when buying any footwear especially running shoes:

- When – Shoes should always be bought at the end of the day rather than first thing in the morning. The foot swells up during the course of the day and so trying on shoes after a day at work will give you a much better idea of how the foot will feel when wearing your shoes for a long time.
- Size – make sure to have enough space in the front from your longest toe. Yes longest – the big guy is not always the longest in the bunch. Having space in the front prevents unnecessary bashing of toes against the toe cap.
- Width – a large majority of people have wide feet so having said that make sure that the width of the shoes matches your own. Buying narrow shoes will only cause problems – and no! the idea of the shoes widening by time does not make sense.
- Shape – feet come in different shapes and so do shoes. Look at the shoe toe box and try and match your own shape which will make the fit much better.

Having said that - running with the shoe itself will give the best result. If you start feeling any aches or pains don't go 'hard or go home' stop, and check your shoes and make sure that everything is ok. Shoes come and go. You only have 1 pair of feet. Unfortunately?!?

Please make sure to always take advice from the right people. Although shoes might have worked well for athlete A it does not mean that athlete B will require the same shoe. Professional advice is always your best bet.



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'How can I best take care of my feet?'

The foot is made up of 26 bones, 30 joints and more than 100 muscles which connect everything together. This perfect piece of machinery in return holds the weight of your body and pushes you forward thru both walking and running.

Grab your calculators. Whilst running the foot hits the ground at around 1.5 to 3x body weight. A 5k run totals around 6000 steps - I'll let you do the Math on this. But keep in mind that a half marathon is 21.1km and a full marathon is 42.2km. I just want to show you how much force passes through feet during running and taking care of our feet can never be enough.

Having said that there are a lot of exercises which runners should be doing specifically for their feet - which should include strength, mobility and stretching as well as regular massage. Keep in mind that the foot is part of bigger chain - the lower limb- so although I'm talking about the foot this whole TLC should be extended to all the lower legs.

Regular Podiatry appointments should be done both pre and post races as well during the training period. Most importantly is to try your best to not leave problems unresolved to days before a race where sometimes it would be very difficult to fix.

I look at the human body as a small skyscraper. If the foundations are not strong and solid you cannot expect that the top part remains steady.



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‘What are the common mistakes when it comes to feet and running?’

We all do mistakes; we are only human – and the human part is that the majority of these mistakes can be corrected.

Knowledge – although we have access to tonnes of information online nothing beats having a check up with a professional. Where during a session all the athletes’ problems can be checked, monitored and also worked up on and tailor made just for YOU. The majority of information we read online can be very much misleading or exaggerated which would make things much worse – both mentally and physically.

I always tell everyone not to overtrain – and to make sure that all your body parts are having the needed rest. However, rest does not always mean sitting put- far from it. Active rest can be taking part in activities other than running which would still be beneficial but not straining. Yoga, Pilates, Mobility Classes, Slack lining, Swimming; is just to name a few.

Having a reliable coach is also key for your running/foot status. A coach can guide you to better your results but also help you improve gradually- by amending your training routine to your needs. Thus, if you have a great coach with a good training regimen, you shouldn’t be straining yourself too much; if so, go back to the drawing board. Slow and steady improvement lets your body adapt constantly and steadily to become a better athlete. Usain Bolt once said that it took him 4 years to run 9s so don’t expect to be ready in 2months.

We are born to run! Yes indeed. However, the evolution of the world has gone by much faster than the evolution of our feet. We are meant to run on grass, soil, trail and other soft materials and not on concrete, tarmac or pavement. This is why we need to make sure to take good care of our feet during running since we are pushing boundaries and running longer and faster which is amazing but don’t forget that the size 43 weird looking 5 toed attachment at the bottom of your body is the major component to your success. Take care of it!