

# BEGINNING TO RUN

by David Spetnagel

The benefits of running are well-documented. Running reduces the risk of heart disease, burns body fat, provides relief from stress, and builds self-confidence. Despite these facts, only about 15% of Americans make running a regular part of their weekly routines. Millions of others start a running program every year, only to become discouraged and return to their sedentary ways. This article provides you, the new runner, the information necessary to avoid the common pitfalls and make running a healthy and enjoyable part of your life.

Running is an uncomplicated activity. You can run anywhere, anytime. No club memberships are required. No machines will fill up your basement. You don't need to burn gas to get to the gym. Strollers designed for running can even save you babysitting expenses! This is not to say that running is equipment-free. You will need proper shoes, some basic apparel, and a sports watch. Starting with these necessities in hand (or on foot) will make your workouts fun and beneficial.

**Shoes** - A typical 150 pound athlete who runs 10 miles per week will hit the ground with about 10 million pounds of impact load each week! Running shoes are designed to absorb much of that load, greatly reducing the pounding that must be absorbed by your body and reducing the risk of developing an injury. Your running shoes should be matched with the specific needs of your foot shape, running style, weight, etc. Quality running shoes can be purchased for as little as \$65 and will carry you at least 300 miles down the road. They are a must!

**Apparel** - A simple rule of thumb applies to running apparel: "Cotton is rotten." Cotton absorbs sweat and holds it directly against the skin. Moist skin is prone to friction blisters. In the dry winter months, surface sweat chills the body as it evaporates. In the humid summer months, surface sweat evaporates slowly, trapping the heat against the body. Therefore, with cotton up against your skin, you will be either cold and miserable or hot and sticky. The answer is to wear garments made of synthetic fabrics that do not absorb moisture (i.e., they "wick" the sweat away from the skin, keeping it dry and comfortable). Synthetic socks (about \$6) and running shorts (about \$25) or winter briefs (about \$20) are running requirements. Women should also wear a non-cotton sports support bra (about \$30).

**Sports Watch** - Runners measure their progress in exercise time and/or distance. Having a digital watch that has a stopwatch feature will make it easier to stick to your training program and to monitor fitness level. There are a multitude of such watches available.