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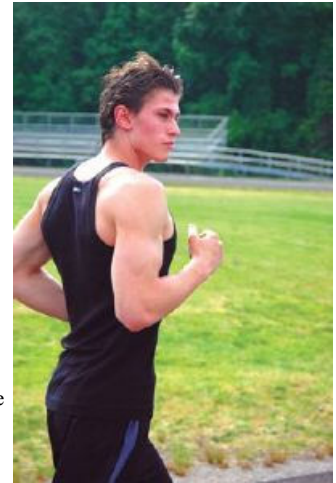
## Run for the health benefits

By Christine H. Haas

**Running is a tedious, painful and exhausting sport. So why do so many Americans do it? Most run for the physical, psychological and cosmetic benefits. Others simply love the rush of adrenaline and the competition. Whatever the case may be, a consistent running schedule can enhance our lives in many ways.**

**A big motivation for runners is the health benefits. Running causes the arteries to expand and contract more than usual, which keeps the arteries elastic and the blood pressure low. Deep breaths cause the lungs to use more tissue, maximizing their potential. Running also strengthens the heart. The stronger the heart, the fewer times the heart beats, which allows the blood to flow more smoothly, which helps reduce the risk of a heart attack.**

Running can also help prevent diseases such as stroke, certain type of cancers and osteoporosis. Regular running is even becoming a treatment option for doctors to prescribe to patients who are in the early stages of osteoporosis, diabetes and hypertension.



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Weight loss may be what attracts most to running. Running only 30 minutes a day can burn as many as 500 calories. Since 3,500 calories are equal to a pound of fat, seven days of a 30-minute running routine may make it possible to lose as much as a pound. Running also prevents muscle loss that often occurs with old age. Maintaining lean muscle is important, as it ensures calorie burn.

Other studies have shown running can help treat depression and other psychological disorders. A 30- to 45-minute run can help relieve tension, confusion and fatigue and can create a feeling of happiness. The research is so strong that psychologists are beginning to use prescribe running to their patients.

When beginning a running program, it is important to start running gradually. At first, run for 15 minutes, then increase your running to 30-60 minutes four to five times per week. If you have pain in your joints or feel out of breath or are dizzy, it is best to lower the intensity of your program.

Before beginning a running program, it is important get a medical check up and inform your doctor of your new venture. In addition, a good pair of running shoes and some loose-fitting clothing will take you a long way.

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