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## How much rest between runs? <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice,

I wanted to know how many days of rest is recommended between workouts. I heard it was three days on to one day off...is this enough? I workout on a treadmill for 50 minutes every day and have for the last 14 months. I was not aware of how rest played a very important role until I recently read a brief article on it. I guess my question is, do I need to take that day of rest and how important is it?

Thank You, G.

### **Answer**

Dear G.,

Kudos to you for developing a healthy workout habit! No matter how fit and healthy you are, all runners require rest periods in order to allow the body to recover and grow stronger. How much rest one needs depends on a lot of factors, such as the type of training one is doing, ageing, injuries, illness, and increases in exercise intensity. Some runners take only one day off per week and find that this is sufficient. Others find that they are their healthiest when they take more. After an intense run, muscles need about 48 hours to recover. Do you find that you are quite sore after running for three days? If so, are you still sore or stiff after your day of rest? If so, this may be an indication that you could benefit from a bit more rest, but there are other causes of soreness besides not enough rest. In addition to soreness, significant weight loss, difficulty sleeping, or an elevated resting heart rate are other indicators you may need more rest.

Running is one the best endurance sports you can do — it gives your cardiovascular system a great workout. It also gives your body quite a beating and this is one reason why rest periods for runners are particularly key. But a day off doesn't have to mean a day off from all physical activity. Many runners (and other athletes, as well) find that they benefit from what's known as the "active rest." This involves doing some other activity in place of running and toning down the intensity level somewhat. Your rest day activity could involve a brisk walk, racquetball, swimming, or riding a bike, for instance. All of these are more low-impact than endurance running and give your body a different type of work out, allowing you to use different muscle groups.

Rest allows your muscles, tendons, ligaments, and bones the opportunity to recover from the beating they take during your 50 minute runs, but there are other ways to ease the stress on your body:

- A good stretch both before and after your run.
- Frequently replacing your running shoes.
- A long warm up (run slowly and ideally on a flat surface for the first 10 to 15 minutes of your run).
- A cool down period (five to ten minutes of a brisk walk or very slow jog at the end of your run).
- Hydration! Drink plenty of water.

Another good argument for changing up the type of exercise you do on your rest days is that your body “adjusts” to your workouts, which means that over time, if you do the same activity, your body becomes so good at it that the workout produces fewer benefits, even as you increase the intensity. Changing the type of activity “shocks” your body, as it is doing something it is less accustomed to and thus working harder. This extra hard work allows you to reap more benefits. Plus, variety keeps life interesting.

But even if you stick with your 50 minute runs three to four times a week, you are doing a great thing for your body. Your body will thank you.

Happy trails,

Alice!

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