

Why Running is (Arguably) the Best Exercise You Can Do



Image via [Pexels](#)

Fitness trends come and go almost as quickly as the fashion that accompanies them (If you're still doing Jazzercise and wearing neon leg warmers, we need to talk). But even as we've watched the rise and fall of hula hoops, step classes, and Tae Bo, there is one exercise that has withstood the test of time: [running](#).

It's hard to pinpoint exactly why running consistently ranks as one of the most popular workouts, but the [low barrier to entry](#) probably has a lot to do with it. You don't need fancy equipment, a monthly membership, or expensive supplements to reap the rewards running provides. With just a pair of running shoes, you can be out the door and on your way to better health.

You can run virtually anywhere - on a track, on a trail, or on a treadmill - and at any time - early in the morning, on your lunch break, or after the kids go to bed. You can do it in every season. There is no instructor or routine. You can go as fast or as slow as you'd like, for just a few minutes or hours at a time. You can do it alone, with friends, or even pushing a baby in a stroller. And because running is so flexible, almost anyone can do it. Males and females, young and old can customize a running schedule to any commitment and fitness level.

Oh, and how about all those health benefits? Running is called the [“king of cardio”](#) for a reason. It gets your heart rate up and decreases your resting heart rate, helping ward off cardiovascular disease and reducing your risk of heart attack. On top of the benefits to your heart, running also strengthens your joints, legs, and core and burns calories to help you maintain a healthy weight.

Running doesn't just make you healthier, though. It also makes you [happier](#). While you're pounding the pavement and pouring sweat, your body is releasing endorphins. These endorphins give you energy or, in some cases, a sense of euphoria. This “runner's high” is generally accompanied by increased social connections, a higher sense of achievement, and increased self-esteem. Seasoned runners say the feeling they get when they run is part of what keeps them going back for more.

Maybe most important to the longevity of the sport, running has the ability to grow with you. Running has neither a floor nor a ceiling. If you've got the motivation, you can go from [non-runner](#) to runner in the space of an afternoon just by lacing up your sneakers. And unlike most trendy workouts, the program doesn't end after 21 days of workouts or a 30-day challenge. You don't have to rewatch the same DVDs or re-do the same workout over and over again. You can vary your course, add distance, or work on your speed.

Road races are another option for runners looking to push themselves. Start out with a 5k and see how it feels. As time goes on, you can work your way up to bigger races, like triathlons and [marathons](#), and if there aren't any local races that pique your interest, there are plenty of opportunities across the country. On the flip side, with technology's help, you don't even have to travel. You can compete in a virtual race from the comfort of your treadmill or home course. Simply register, submit your information, and pick up your medal in the mail.

They say the best exercise is the one you'll actually do, and trendy workouts do keep fitness fun and engaging. But at the end of the day, no other form of exercise can compete with a good, old-fashioned run. The benefits to your health and well-being, combined with the ease of access and growth potential of the sport, make it easy to see why it's still a top choice of athletes after all these years... and why it's here to stay.

