



"No Sweat Fitness" Newsletter

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The No-Shoe Shoe

> [FIVEFINGERS CLASSIC](#)



Nope, the image above is not a glove for your feet, although it certainly looks like one. This is the Vibram Classic athletic shoe for those people who believe that barefoot running is more natural &

January 2010



Can Running Protect Your Knees?

Along with the 8 glasses of water rule, probably the biggest health myth is that running is hard on the knees and joints. Everyone knows someone or has an unnamed friend who has blown out their knee or torn a tendon because they were running too much. However, 2 studies over the past few years have thrown a wrench in that thinking and some even believe that running can protect your knees!

In 1997 researchers from a hospital in Austria performed M.R.I. s on the knees of 22 runners competing in the Vienna marathon. Ten years later they again examined these runner knees. Amazingly, they found no new damage in those intervening years. Their conclusion was that this continuous running was protective, not destructive, to the knees.

The second study was in 2008 at Stanford University. This was a 20 year study that involved a group of middle-aged long-distance runners. They compared the runners' M.R.I.'s just like the Austrian study. They also compared the results to a control group of people of similar age. Once again, the runners' knees were healthier. Their hypotheses for these results were that by running you develop a "motion groove" that conditions & improves your

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Right-click to open Image Formatting Options
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comfortable for your body. This shoe mimics the feel of being barefeet, while protecting them. These "shoes" are not cheap and reviews say they take some getting used to, but if you're curious check out their website!

[Vibram Shoes](#)

cartilage and acts as a partial guard against arthritis.

Not everyone is ready to jump on the running bandwagon though. The small sample size for the studies and the inability to find good aged-matched controls make the studies difficult to accept. Dr. Timothy Hewitt, professor and director of the Sports Medicine Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital is skeptical of the studies' findings. "(Runners) run with poor mechanics, on hard surfaces, with shoes that are past their peak...the studies posit a perfect world, one most of us don't run in."

True, ample studies have show that running too much, too soon, and not stopping when you begin to feel pain will lead you down a path to knee and joint problems, but what about the effects of not running? "If you sit in a chair all day, you have an increased risk of osteoarthritis," according to Dr. Francis O'Connor. "Normal joints...are not at risk from repetitive, low-impact recreational exercise. And running, compared to other sports, is considered low-impact."

If you want to begin running, here are some tried & true suggestions:

***If you've had joint problems, make an appointment with your doctor.**

***Learn good running mechanics; ask a personal trainer to evaluate you.**

***Get the best shoes for your feet & change them every 500 miles.**

***Don't increase the volume of your running by more than 10% per week.**

***Never run through pain. Take note of discomfort and treat it.**

Family health history is important

Create a medical family tree

Your medical future is affected by your family's medical past, so channel your inner Sherlock Holmes and begin compiling your medical family tree. Quiz your relatives about their health conditions and the age they were when problems started, then visit FamilyHistory.hhs.gov to create a free Family Health Portrait that reveals your risks. Knowing what problems you may face can keep you aware and proactive.

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