

## **Kneed for Speed: Why Running Might Not Be Such a Pain**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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### **PRINT SCRIPT**

There's good news for both "weekend warriors" and "marathon maniacs" who prioritize running.

Researchers from Northwestern University surveyed more than 3,800 Chicago Marathon runners about how many years they'd been running, their pace, and if they had any family history of arthritis. The results, which were presented at the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) annual meeting, showed no connection between their running habits and an increased risk of knee or hip arthritis.

Karan Rai, MD, an OSF HealthCare physician who specializes in sports medicine, says the benefits of running far outweigh the risks.

"The common myth or misnomer out there is that running can cause arthritis or that it's a big risk factor for arthritis," says Dr. Rai. "What we've found over time is that it helps the joints. There's a little bit of that 'use it or lose it' where the little bit of stress that running can do, when performed safely, can actually help the joint health."

Dr. Rai works on running plans with patients who have arthritis. He says if you love running, you can still personalize your plan to make it work for you.

"For people who already have arthritis, you may want to modify how you run. Choose surfaces that are more even, maybe go for shorter periods of time," Dr. Rai says. "Usually, when I'm having that discussion with my patients regarding running and arthritis, I first get a basic understanding of what their physical activity level is before suggesting how to introduce running into their exercise regimens."

If you're looking to get into running, Dr. Rai says running on an indoor surface is a good place to start.

"Outdoor running can be a little more problematic for people with arthritis. Another thing I discuss with my patients is your mileage. Studies have shown as we get up to more than 15-20 miles a week, your risk for injury rises significantly," explains Dr. Rai. "Impact matters. Footwear helps cushion that impact. If you're a regular runner I strongly recommend switching your shoes out every six months or so. Or every 300-500 miles."

But if arthritis becomes more severe, Dr. Rai says running won't be recommended.

"If someone is exhibiting signs of moderate to severe arthritis, it can hasten the progression of arthritis," Dr. Rai says. "But that needs to be individualized. Because I always prioritize, from the medical side, a person's goals and desires when it comes to activities and hobbies like running. Because there is a great mental health benefit to that, too."

Dr. Rai recommends new runners start slow, listen to your body and focus on how you feel while you run. He adds that some muscle soreness is normal, but if you have persistent pain multiple days after running, you may be running in a way that is detrimental to yourself.