

RUNNING

When you're spoilt for choice by today's fitness fads, simply putting one foot in front of the other (fast) is still a winner.

Daytona DMXi,
\$159, by Reebok.



WHAT'S THE DEAL?

Whether you pound away on the treadmill, eyes glued to *The Bold and the Beautiful*, or beat a fast track around your local footpaths, running is one of the most accessible activities around, "because you don't need anyone to help you", says personal trainer and running fanatic Janie Larmour. "You don't need classes, you don't need equipment, and you can do it wherever and whenever you like."

Best suited to:

- People in high-stress jobs.
- Anyone with a dog.
- People who want a sport that allows them to zone out and think about their own issues, and who don't like to follow orders or complicated routines.

BENEFITS

- Running releases stress stored by the body, says Larmour. "It helps to get it out of you physically and mentally. Once, I even burst out crying while I was running."
- Running also cleans out your lungs. "Plus, the fact that you're breathing so heavily gets your whole digestive system going," says Larmour.
- Many people use running as a means of reflection. "Your mind just wanders," says Larmour. "Answers come to you like when you're meditating. You think of problems that seem really big and suddenly you realise how small and stupid they are. The best way is to picture in your head what the problem is, then ask yourself how you can sort it out, and the answers will come to you."
- You can also get addicted to the adrenalin rush it gives you. "You start to just love it," says Larmour.
- Weight loss.

■ Running provides a major boost to your metabolism – you will continue to burn kilojoules more effectively long after you finish a run.

THE FIRST STEP

First you need to decide if you want to run outdoors or on a treadmill. It's a personal choice, and also one of budget. Outdoor runners usually like the fresh air and the scenery, while indoor runners prefer to zone out staring at a blank wall or watching television (which is fine, says Larmour, as long as you maintain your balance).

When will I see results?

How soon you can see an improvement in your physical appearance and fitness levels differs with each individual. "Results are determined by so many factors," says Larmour. "It depends on how quickly you can get into the ideal running routine, on your eating habits (as with any exercise), and on how hard you push yourself." Results can occur anywhere between three weeks or three months. If you're the latter case, don't give up. "It is often the case that the people who take the longest to shed body fat see the most drastic results," says Larmour.

If you choose to run outdoors, run wherever is aesthetically pleasing to you. Try to avoid anything that will soon become mundane, like doing rounds of the local footy oval. Also try to avoid hilly areas at the start: uphill will be too hard for beginners and downhill puts too much stress on the body.

Try to fit several weekly runs into your lifestyle. It's good to run whenever you feel the urge or when you're stressed, but the ideal time is first thing in the morning, before eating. "That way, you're burning free fatty acids for fuel," explains Larmour.

Approach it with a positive frame of mind. "Most people don't like it at the start, but grow to love it," says Larmour. "You have to get past telling yourself it's painful and hard. Ask yourself what it is that's actually sore or tired – mostly it will



Note:
If you're heavy-chested, running can be uncomfortable. Larmour advises investing in a really good sports bra.

be all in your mind. Making yourself believe you can actually do something you never thought you could is a real mental challenge. Once you surrender to the fact that you're actually running, you can start to enjoy it." Further benefit: you can relate this empowerment to other situations. "You realise it's just your own fears stopping you from doing things," says Larmour.

STEPPING OUT

If you're a beginner start out slowly. Running can initially be extra hard if you are overweight, as it puts a lot of pressure on the joints and on the heart, so be careful. Start by building up your cardiovascular fitness by simply walking. Do 20-minute sessions, three times a week. "Don't force yourself too much at the start," says Larmour. "Avoid hills, stairs and sprinting. Once you're fine with walking, start running for two minutes at a time, then try five, then ten, and so on. Or do interval training, where you run until you can't run any more, then walk, then run again when you're ready."

Your goal is to run for about 40-50 minutes (about 6-10km), three to four times a week – although, says Larmour, some people can take a few months to get to this stage. But once you're running solidly, even sessions of 15-20 minutes will be effective, until you can work up to running for longer periods. Always start by walking for five minutes, and then walk again at the end for a few minutes to get your heart rate down.

SPEED IT UP

Don't intensify your runs before you're ready. "If you hate the run itself and torture yourself," says Larmour, "you won't want to run again – even if you feel fantastic afterwards – because all you'll remember is how much you



Sony Portable Mini Disc MZ-E33, \$469.

hated it. The idea is to push yourself, but don't thrash yourself." Interval training is a good way to challenge your heart rate.

Other boosters: run uphill, run up steps or do sprints (where you choose a point and run to it as fast as you can). Or, if you're on a treadmill, increase the incline for a few minutes at a time. Intensifying a run is not so much about making yourself go for longer as it is about getting more out of your usual sessions and increasing your lung capacity. When you get to the stage where you're happy with your results – when it's not a struggle to run for these periods and intensities, and when you enjoy running as part of your lifestyle – your running sessions should become more about maintenance.

INJURY PREVENTION

Weight training

Larmour advises runners to do some light lower-body weight training, to strengthen the muscles around the knee and help prevent injuries. She recommends weekly gym sessions that include time on the stairmaster, and time spent doing lower-body conditioning work, like squats and lunges.

» Avoid anything that will become mundane, like doing rounds of the footy oval.

Motivating moves

Running is mostly a solo act, so it can be hard to stay motivated. Try the following:

- Run with a friend.
- Run to music.
- Run somewhere specific. Try a juice bar, and treat yourself with a fresh juice or frozen yoghurt, or run to the beach so you can enjoy the scenery and the sea air.
- Always be aware of the benefits of running. Think of how good you feel at the end of every jogging session.
- Do not think negative thoughts about your body or self-image. "The key is to keep positive," says Larmour. "Repeat your own motivating affirmations to yourself. Tell yourself how good running makes you feel and how good you'll look in that new dress you just bought."

RUNNING

The shoes

"You *must* have the right shoes," insists Larmour. "Once you have them, you can run safely on any surface – even cement footpaths will be fine." It's not always necessary to fork out a huge amount of money for the latest look, but it is essential to buy well-fitting shoes. Stick to reputable big-name brands and get some advice from a qualified fitter in a large sports store, preferably one big on running. The right shoes can prevent shin splints and address the specific needs of your feet.

Stretches

Stretching is essential. "If you're having knee problems," says Larmour, "it's usually because your quadriceps are weak and your hamstring and calf muscles are tight." Even more important than stretching before you run, according to Larmour, is stretching afterwards. Try some of the following stretches and those pictured:

■ **Hamstring stretch:** Lie on your back, raise your right leg in the air, flex the foot and place a towel over it, hold each end of the towel and use it to pull your foot down towards you. Repeat other side.

■ **Upper-body stretching:** When you run, you hold a lot of tension between your shoulder blades, so you need to stretch out this area, too. Do a variety of stretches that target this spot, such as pulling one arm right across your body. ☐

Orange Bra Top, \$40, with Navy Poplin Short, \$33, and Daytona DMXi trainers, \$159, all by Reebok.



CALF STRETCH:

Bending your left knee, extend your right leg until straight with foot flexed. Then push down gently on your right thigh. Repeat other side.



ACHILLES TENDON STRETCH: >>

With both arms out in front of you, hands placed on a wall, step back with your right leg and, keeping both feet flat on the ground, push your knee down towards the ground. Repeat other side.



QUADRICEPS STRETCH: Rest your left hand on the wall in front of you for support, bend your right leg at the knee and bring your foot towards your butt, and pull it up behind you with your right hand. Repeat other side.

