



HEALTH TIP: Olive oil can help reduce joint pain and swelling caused by rheumatoid arthritis



The vitamins and minerals in spinach can bring you quick relief from dry and itchy skin



ASK THE SEXPERT
DR MAHINDER WATSA

1 I am a 32-year-old man. I am healthy and exercise regularly. But, over the past three months the foreskin on my penis has started rupturing. It develops cracks whenever I masturbate. I tried lubricating it with lotions and oil but to no avail. I started applying an ointment and masturbating once a week and that helped me to some extent. But, the problem persists. Please suggest an ointment I may use. Is there a solution for this problem?

Get checked for diabetes as this is often the cause of this condition. Visit a urologist to have your problem diagnosed and treated.

2 I am a 22-year-old man and my girlfriend is 20. We had sex using a condom and it remained intact. Now, she has missed her periods twice and has been experiencing back pain from the last few days. We are very worried. Could she be pregnant? If yes, what should we do next?

Not likely. Please consult a gynaecologist or a family doctor to find out what's causing her condition.

3 I am a 24-year-old man. I have recently experienced some redness on the head of my penis and under the skin. Even though I did not pay heed to it initially, I did consult a doctor for this. The doctor had given me some medication, but it had no effect. I am really panicking now because the problem is getting worse every day. Please help me. What should I do?

If you do not see any improvement at all, do consult a skin specialist. From the description it seems like there is nothing to worry about.

HOW TO RUN LIKE A PRO



The idea is to build up your stamina as opposed to pushing yourself too hard, says Muhr

Richard Muhr gives you four tips to be a better runner

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In 2013, Richard 'Rick' Muhr, a marathon training coach for the Boston Marathon, went on a 12,000 mile bike trip. Fifty-five at the time, Muhr logged over 1,000 miles every day and survived mainly on energy drinks and bars which he would consume when he stopped to refuel, as time is of the essence. The feat was therefore a true test of the coach's fortitude and discipline, qualities that Muhr feels are essential for runners. To this list, Muhr, who was recently invited to Mumbai by a gym equipment company, also adds, "patience, consistency and moderation".

With 20 years of marathon-coaching experience, Muhr says that to become a runner, "Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day, four or five days a week. That's good for starters. Running should be introduced gradually into your regimen. When you are out walking, try to run for 50 metres at a stretch and then go back to walking until you catch your breath and feel fully recovered. The next day, try running for maybe 60 metres and then return to walking. Soon, you will notice that you are running more than walking."

Motivate yourself with a marathon

The official distance of a marathon is 42.195 kilometres, so preparing for this feat requires determination. But, signing up for a marathon is a great way to motivate yourself to run every day and push your limits further. Muhr, who has run more than 32 marathons says, "When your purpose is greater than to just get to the finish line, you don't need too much encouragement to work at building your stamina. Maybe you have lost a parent to a disease, or there may be a cause like child welfare or the protection of stray dogs — something that you believe in. Why not raise money for it?"

When Muhr lost his mother in 1996, he went to New England right after the funeral and ran a marathon in her memory. Now, he helps train a group of 400 runners for marathons, many of whom have never even run more than 100 metres.

He suggests, "Allow yourself adequate time to get in shape — between four and five months at a minimum. It's also a good idea to train with a group as you end up encouraging each other."

Work on your posture and technique

While marathon running requires calm and consistency, sprinting, says Muhr, is best for short distances. However, he cautions, "sprinting poses a great risk of injury". To avoid injury, it's important to adopt the right form

while running.

A search for 'correct running form' on the internet throws up a lot of technical terms like 'loading rate,' 'swing phase' and 'stance time', but the lexicon only makes the idea of running more intimidating. Muhr simplifies it. "The upper body should be relaxed and your breathing should be rhythmic. This should be maintained over the course of your run. A lot of people are able to maintain good form while running for about a kilometre. But, very few can maintain it for the length of a full marathon."

Build your stamina

One's stamina goals depend on one's experience as a runner. For instance, beginners want to build their stamina so they can cover longer distances — go from running a kilometre to two, then three and so on. That said, seasoned runners work on their stamina too. For them, it's not about covering longer distances only. These runners want to work on their pace — they want to work on their stamina in order to be able to cover the distance they usually run, in less time.

Whatever the goal, however, Muhr says, "The idea is to gradually build up your stamina as opposed to pushing yourself too hard." He recommends adopting what he calls "the hard and easy approach". The idea is to work hard one day and take it easy the next. "Don't just run," he suggests, "Take up cross-training, for example." Cross-training refers to training for more than one sport and this, Muhr

believes, "isn't just a great way to build up stamina, it will also help you strengthen your muscles and thereby avoid injuries". So, if you run one day, you can ride a bike another day, or go swimming. "This way, you are not running every day, but every three or four days. It's the repetitive impact which creates chronic and serious injuries. Always listen to your body and don't push yourself when you are not well rested."

Drink chocolate shake

Muhr shares a delicious secret: "Chocolate milkshake is the best drink after a workout." This, he explains, "has the perfect ratio of carbohydrates to proteins — 4:1. Protein repairs and re-builds muscles; carbohydrates are required to build lean muscle mass". Therefore, says Muhr, it's preferable to have a light breakfast before going for a morning run — "maybe some toast, fruits, or an energy bar. When you wake up in the morning, you have been without food for the longest time in the 24-hour period. So, before you go for a morning run, it is absolutely vital to fuel up".

Research has shown that chocolate milkshake can hasten recovery if consumed after intense exercise. Alternately, you can fix yourself another homemade recovery drink that has the same carbs-to-protein ratio, like a banana-berry-grape-orange-apple smoothie. "Ideally, your recovery drink should be consumed within 30 to 60 minutes after the run."



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