

Nine Weeks to Recovery *by Pete Pfitzinger*

Use deep-water running to maintain your training while injured

RUNNING

TIMES

One activity most injured runners can do without pain or aggravation is deep-water running. Running in the water while wearing a flotation vest provides an excellent training stimulus and more closely simulates land running than most other cross-training options. Deep-water running is a total-body exercise that works your legs, trunk and arms, and positively stresses your cardiovascular system.

Proper technique for water running is an area of some debate. Some coaches insist that you try to simulate land-running form as closely as possible. Although that is a nice ideal, I believe that the most important consideration is to maintain your training intensity to the degree possible, and if your form isn't perfect, so be it. Regardless of your running form, your stride rate will be slower when water running because of the increased resistance of moving your legs through water. If you try to simulate land running too closely, your stride rate will be even slower. For that reason, don't worry if your leg isn't brought behind the body to the same degree as in land running. Find a happy compromise with decent form and a reasonable rate of leg turnover.

Some athletes move forward while running in the water and actually do laps during their workouts. Whether you move forward or remain relatively still depends on subtle differences in body position. I recommend a relatively upright posture during water-running workouts. This will work your trunk muscles and result in only a slight tendency to move forward through the water.

To survive a no-running routine while your injury heals, you need a schedule that provides structure and poses a challenge. With the program outlined below, you don't have to worry about losing fitness. In fact, if you approach the program aggressively, you may come out of the water fitter than before your injury.

This schedule is not for the faint of heart. The program includes five days of deep-water running per week for eight weeks. One day per week calls for a specific 30 to 45-minute stretching session. The seventh day calls for another form of cross-training (if your injury will allow it) or rest. In the ninth week, you start to reintroduce land running to your schedule. When you look at the schedule, you will notice a lot of interval workouts. That's because it is very difficult to work at a high enough intensity to maintain your fitness if all you do is steady-state water running. Interval sessions in the water give you brief breaks (both physical and mental); these allow you to work harder and obtain a superior workout. Another plus is that time passes relatively quickly while doing intervals, whereas steady water running is boring.

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WEEK	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 5 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 32:00	5:00 warm-up 6 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 28:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 30:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #1 (see below) Total workout: 32:00	5:00 warm-up 4 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 34:00	30:00 alternate cross-training or rest
2	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 6 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 36:00	5:00 warm-up 7 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 31:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 35:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #1 (see below) Total workout: 32:00	5:00 warm-up 5 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 40:00	35:00 alternate cross-training or rest
3	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 7 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 40:00	5:00 warm-up 8 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 34:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 40:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #1 (see below) Total workout: 32:00	5:00 warm-up 6 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 46:00	40:00 alternate cross-training or rest
4	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 8 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 44:00	5:00 warm-up 9 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 37:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 45:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #2 (see below) Total workout: 37:00	5:00 warm-up 7 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 52:00	45:00 alternate cross-training or rest
5	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 9 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 48:00	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 5 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 42:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 50:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #2 (see below) Total workout: 37:00	5:00 warm-up 8 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 58:00	50:00 alternate cross-training or rest

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WEEK	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 10 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 52:00	5:00 warm-up 1 set of 6 x 2:30 hard 1 set of 5 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 45:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 55:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #2 (see below) Total workout: 37:00	5:00 warm-up 8 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 5 x :45 hard (:15 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 63:00	55:00 alternate cross-training or rest
7	5:00 warm-up 3 sets of 7 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 56:00	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 6 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 48:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 60:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #3 (see below) Total workout: 43:00	5:00 warm-up 8 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 10 x :45 hard (:15 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 68:00	60:00 alternate cross-training or rest
8	5:00 warm-up 3 sets of 8 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 62:00	5:00 warm-up 2 sets of 6 x 2:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 48:00	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 65:00 steady	30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #3 (see below) Total workout: 43:00	5:00 warm-up 8 x 5:00 hard (1:00 easy recovery) 10 x :45 hard (:15 easy recovery) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 68:00	65:00 alternate cross-training or rest
9	5:00 warm-up 3 sets of 9 x 1:30 hard (:30 easy recovery; 2:00 easy between sets) 5:00 cool-down Total workout: 68:00	Run 10:00 on soft surface	5:00 warm-up 5:00 stretching 70:00 steady	Run 10:00 on soft surface 30:00 to 45:00 flexibility	Ladder Workout #3 (see below) Total workout: 43:00	Run 10:00 on soft surface	70:00 alternate cross-training or rest

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Ladder Workout #1:

5:00 warm-up.

Run 1:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 4:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 1:00 hard.

5:00 cool-down.

Ladder Workout #2:

5:00 warm-up.

1:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 4:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 4:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 1:00 hard.

5:00 cool-down

Ladder Workout #3:

5:00 warm-up.

1:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 4:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 5:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 4:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 3:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 2:00 hard, 1:00 easy, 1:00 hard.

5:00 cool-down.



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MONDAYS: Sessions are repeats of 1:30 hard followed by 30 seconds of easy recovery running. The first week, you warm up, then do two sets of five intervals with a two-minute break between the two sets. At the end of your cool-down, you'll have completed 32 minutes of water running, with 15 minutes of that at high intensity. Over the nine weeks, Monday workouts progress to three sets of nine reps for a total workout of 68 minutes with just over 40 minutes at high intensity.

TUESDAYS: Workouts consist of longer repeats (2:30) with 30 seconds recovery. These are tougher than Monday sessions because you must hold the intensity of each interval longer, while the rest remains the same. This workout is very efficient when you are pressed for time. In the ninth week, you blissfully get to go out for your first run, albeit only 10 easy minutes.

WEDNESDAYS: This workout is the mentally toughest of the week. It is the only water-running workout of the week that you do at a steady effort level.

THURSDAYS: After three successive days in the water, you need a break. This is the perfect opportunity to do the stretching that you usually put off because of lack of time. A 30- to 45-minute session dedicated specifically to stretching will improve your flexibility and help prevent future injuries once you are back running. Yoga is a great alternative.

FRIDAYS: It's back to the pool for more intervals—this time a ladder. You start with 1:00 hard followed by 1:00 easy, then hold the recovery at 1:00 and increase the duration of the hard efforts, then decrease it going back down the ladder. This workout feels great on the way back down.

SATURDAYS: A mentally tough day with reps of 5:00. The first week calls for four reps of 5:00 hard with 1:00 easy between efforts, and you build up to eight reps of 5:00 hard, followed by 10 times 45-seconds hard. The challenge is to maintain your mental focus during the 5:00 efforts. During this session, I find it helpful to keep my concentration by visualizing running repeat miles on the track. (Man, you must be hurting when you fantasize about running repeat miles!)

SUNDAYS: Do either another form of cross-training such as cycling or rowing (if your injury will allow it) or rest. A long, vigorous walk on Sunday will give you some of the aesthetic and mental benefits of a run and will help prepare your legs for your return to land running.

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