

Serving the local community since 2001

Back in Shape



Physiotherapy & Pilates



Helen's Mat Classes

Term dates: 2021 Term 3

Start: Monday 12 July 2021

End: Friday 17 September 2021

Alphington Bowls Club

Parkview Rd, Alphington

All ages and abilities classes

Mon: 12-1pm & 7-8pm

Wed: 5.30-6.30pm (**Zoom only**)

Fri: 9.15-10.15am & 10.30-11.30am

Cost: Mon: 10-week term: \$250

Wed: 10-week term: \$250

Fri: 10-week term: \$250

There will be no casual attendance in order to regulate class sizes. However, all participants will have access to the Wednesday class Zoom recording on my website, plus all previous term's recordings.

St. Andrews Uniting Church

85 Gillies Street, Fairfield

These classes were formerly held at the Fairfield Community Centre.

Over 50s class

Mon: 9.30-10.20am

Cost: 10-week term: \$140

Limited mobility class

Mon: 10.30-11.20am

Cost: 10-week term: \$140

There will be no casual attendance in order to regulate class sizes. If you are unable to attend the class, you can do it on Zoom instead. You just need to let me know before 8.30am on the Monday. The Zoom recordings will also be available on my website so you can make up a class at any time.

PUBLIC HOLIDAY ALERT:

There are
no public holidays
this term

Putting the bounce back in your step

My regular readers will recall that I began running a couple of years ago to increase the amount of 'impact exercise' into my life, in order to fight off osteopaenia and osteoporosis. Since then, a number of you have expressed concerns to me either about taking up running for the first time or indeed returning to running after a break.

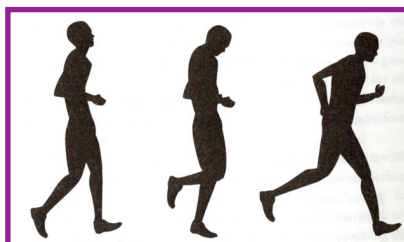
While it is true that an alarming percentage of runners are injured each year, we need to understand that this is not because of the nature of running itself, but the way we try to run I have recently come across an inspirational book by Shane Benzie called *'The Lost Art of Running'*, in which he investigates how we actually run and, more importantly, how we are designed to run.

We succeeded as a species due to our 'persistence hunting' capabilities—the ability to exhaust our prey by running them to the point of collapse. Until a mere 10,000 years ago this is how we survived, and in evolutionary terms we have not changed much since that time.

What has changed, however, is that we no longer need to run many tens of kilometres to provide dinner: we accomplish the same result in most cases by sitting at a desk for eight hours a day. This means we tend to adopt a hunched-over position when we run, as demonstrated in the first picture below. What we are striving for is the more upright gait shown in the second picture. (Both pictures copied from *'The Lost Art of Running'*).

Benzie explains how the ideal running posture utilises our connective tissues—including tendons, ligaments and fascia—to store and release elastic energy. If you can imagine the body comprising a series of bungee cords from head to toe, then in the first picture the bungee cords will be slack and ineffective. By contrast, with the more upright and dynamic posture seen in the second picture, the bungee cords will be taught and springy.

This taughtness means that every footfall temporarily harnesses elastic energy that quite literally will be used to put a spring in our next step, measurably reducing the work our muscles need to do. Whatever your current running ability, this concept will help you: it will enable you to run further and faster with less fatigue; and more importantly it will help minimise impact-related injuries.



Running is one of those activities that most of us think we know how to do. After all, when we were children we probably spent a great deal of time running around. However, just as most of us would not think about taking up a new sport—consider golf, as an example—without learning the skills involved in hitting a small white ball reliably where we want it to go, we equally need to consider what constitutes good running form. There are a surprising number of focusses we need to adopt to get it right!

I am particularly interested in this subject for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I have only taken up running relatively late in life myself, and have worried about injury. And secondly, the body positions advocated by Benzie tie in remarkably consistently with how Pilates teaches us to hold ourselves, especially with regard to using our core muscles to stabilise the rest of the body.

I have summarised the body position and movement focusses in the side article to help provide a list of improvements to contemplate while you are running. As with Pilates, these will take a while to master, but even small incremental improvements will help improve your running style, enhance your enjoyment of the activity, and reduce the chance of injury.

Personally, I aim to focus on a different aspect of good form each time I run and see how these cumulatively affect my performance over time. I'm sure we can all agree that running is more about the journey than the destination, so I aim to enjoy the process. So happy running, and I hope to see fewer of you on my treatment couch with running-related injuries in the future!

Active Standing Exercises

'Active Standing Exercises' can be performed anywhere at any time when you are on your feet with a few minutes to kill. For example, when waiting in a supermarket queue you no longer need to feel as though your time is being wasted. Instead of just standing there getting frustrated, stand actively instead!

Pelvic Floor Elevator

We have covered this before as a 'Traffic Light' sitting exercise and have also worked on this during last term. It is a good one to add to the repertoire of exercises you do regularly in order to fine-tune your pelvic floor control and to remind yourself that this is a group of muscles that are not just on or off, but which can be tightened to varying degrees.

- Start by performing a normal pelvic floor contraction. Take a breath in and as you breathe out squeeze the muscles around the opening of your bladder, back passage and (for the women) your vagina.
- Notice how much you feel these muscles lifting, and equally how much they relax as you breathe in.
- As a beginner, then imagine your pelvic floor is an elevator in a two-storey building. On the breath out, lift the pelvic floor to the first floor, and then the second floor. As you breathe in, lower back to the first and then the ground floor. Do not bear down and end up in the basement!
- Once you can perfect this, you can progress to a three-storey building, then a four-storey and, if you are really good, a five-storey building.
- Perform three to four reps as often as you like: I'd suggest every hour. Perhaps use a regular occurrence, such as washing your hands, as a reminder to do these.

Running form focusses

From head to toe, here is a summary of twelve focusses that will help you achieve a better running form:

1. Stand as tall as you can.
2. Keep your head up, looking to the horizon if possible, rather than the ground in front of you.
3. Puff your chest out. This will help tighten the fascia and also open up your lungs to help you breathe better.
4. Use your arms! Your legs follow what your arms do, so focus on an efficient arm movement for a corresponding efficient leg movement. Concentrate on your arms' backswing to encourage opening up your leg movement behind your body. If you are in the habit of carrying a water bottle or phone, there is a good chance that this will make your arm movement asymmetrical and likewise your leg movement.
5. Suck your belly button in.
6. Do not bend from the waist. With the body positions above mastered, you will be able to lean the column of your body forward from the ankles instead. In effect, this is your accelerator: the more you lean (not bend), the faster you will go!
7. Aim to move your legs in a circular motion as though pedalling a bike. This will get more height into your stride and ensure your legs have more time to progress further through their cycle before landing. Instead of increasing your stride length in front of you, think about opening it up behind you instead. Get this right, and you will immediately feel lighter on your feet.
8. Avoid landing on your heel. This works in conjunction with the previous focus, which will help ensure your feet land more naturally under your centre of gravity each step, dramatically reducing the impact transmitted through the ankles, knees, hips and back (and hence minimising injury).
9. Try instead to land on your mid foot. Imagine a triangle between the base of your big toe, smallest toe and your heel. This is a very stable platform on which to land.
10. Try to achieve a cadence between 175-185 steps a minute. For most of us, this feels like a lot and will take a bit of working on. The whole leg movement should make you think of the Roadrunner cartoon!
11. Relax. Perhaps a bit of a big ask, but with the exception of your core muscles maintaining your upright position, the rest of your body should be relaxed.
12. Smile. Running should not be a chore. Remember, you are running because you want to, and are re-engaging with something fundamental we are all designed to do. Therefore, enjoy the process.

