



run, forrest, run!

Running can give the greatest high, but it can also be a painful process. Seventy percent of runners suffer from an overuse injury each year, more than 80 percent of which occur below the knee.

But it's not only long runs that lead to aches and pains, according to new research published in *Sports Health: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (May/June 2009). The study found that the culprit is more likely foot pronation and inadequate hip-muscle stabilization. In one study, 22 of 24 runners who completed five to six weeks of strength training experienced a significant decrease in pain and a 35 to 51 percent increase in hip-abductor strength.

Good news indeed, but Pilates pros have recognized this connection for eons. Polestar Pilates president and CEO Brent Anderson, PhD, PT, OCS, notes, "Pilates training has served as a balancing exercise system benefiting athletes of all types. Clinically we



have known for years that Pilates minimizes postural deviations that are often the mechanism of injury to athletes. Distance runners are no exception—strengthening the core, aligning the lower limbs and increasing coordination and awareness of the body all lead to a decrease in injury and an increase in performance." So before your next run, warm up with Dr. Brent's five-minute series to strengthen your hip muscles:

- 1. Pelvic Circles and Bridging (loosens spine and hips)**
- 2. Hundred (warms core; increases core strength)**
- 3. Sidekicks (improves coordination between core strength and hamstring/hip-flexor flexibility)**
- 4. Sidelifts (strengthens hip abductors, the most common injury mechanism in runners)**
- 5. Prone Double-heel Kick (frees up quads and hip flexors; offers a sustained quad stretch)**
- 6. Standing Roll-down (increases balance; stretches hamstring; aids in spine mobility)**
- 7. Finish with some regular heel raises and calf stretches to prepare your lower legs, making sure you pay close attention to the alignment of your ankle over your second toe.**

—Amanda Altman