



## SAFE RUNNING START FOR YOUNGSTERS

**How young is it ok to start kids running?** Sprinting and short bursts of running are okay at any age. Children can gradually build up to running the following distances safely:

Age 5 – 100-200 meters

Age 6-7 – 3K

Age 8-10 – 5K

Age 11-14 – 10K to Half marathon

**What are the basics I need to get started?** High quality, supportive running shoes. Water bottles for hydration. Good attitude. Proper and optimum nutrition is obviously an important topic and look for an in depth discussion here soon.

**How do I keep it interesting?** Find a buddy, set goals and mix up your running workouts with cross training. Activities like swimming biking and hiking, and anything that keeps your heart rate up for a sustained period of time, all build aerobic capacity. Building your aerobic capacity will improve your running endurance as well. We'll talk more on the importance of cross training later too.

**Within the 11-14 age range, when is it realistic to be ready to run a half marathon?** There's no specific age where it is safe to run a half marathon. It depends on many factors, including how well your body is prepared and on proper training. But it also depends on an individual's physical development. Within the 11-14 age range there is a huge disparity between physical maturity in individuals.

Most healthy kids in the 11-14 age range should be safely able to run a 10K. If you successfully complete a 10k **and enjoyed it** (this is a key point), you might contemplate the half marathon. For kids who really want to make the leap to the half marathon distance, I recommend getting cleared by their own doctors before

embarking on serious training.

**How to I build up to longer distances and what should I be aware of?** Slow and steady is the key. Start your preparation early and build distance gradually. A good guideline is to add no more than 10 percent to your overall training distance each week. So if you log 10 miles one week you could shoot for 11 miles the next week. By staying within that 10 percent increase your body will adjust as you build to longer distances. Also, allow for at least one full day off of training per week, and do no more than 5 days per week of the same activity.

**What about the 5K walk. Is that a good goal for any age?** Yes! Make it fun and work walking into your routine. The goal of any athletic event is to promote a healthy active lifestyle and a lifelong love of physical activity. The more fun it is the more likely you'll stick with it.

**Going to a track is an easy way to gauge distance,** or clock out a route in your car through a familiar neighborhood to know various distances.

**Run with a buddy and avoid busy roads whenever possible.** When you do run on the roads be sure to wear bright colors and always run against the traffic.

**Anything else to keep in mind?** Listen to your body. When doing any sport it is important to learn how to recognize what your body is telling you. Pain of any kind is a red or yellow light, and you are the only one who can feel it. Even when you're following a sound training plan, there may be times your body is telling you it needs a break. Keep in mind that being fit and healthy means doing what feels right for your own body and fitness level.