

## **GYM TRAINING FOR RUNNERS**

**Cross-training means incorporating one or more different physical activities into your training, whatever your main training activity may be. If running is your main training activity, you may benefit from other disciplines such as swimming, cycling, rowing, team sports, yoga, pilates and strength-training, to name a few.**

### **Benefits of Cross Training for Runners**

- By crossing over into other training methods you can improve the balance of your muscles, making the body stronger as a whole and thereby reducing the risk of injury.
- By using another physical activity a runner who has sustained a running-related injury can continue to train and maintain fitness, provided the other activity does not strain the affected area.
- Cross-training provides variety for a runner – mixing up the training can help keep you interested and happy.

### **Some Specific Gym-based Cross Training Methods**

Rowing, cycling and strength-training are a few methods which can be used to good effect in the gym to supplement your running.

#### **Indoor Rowing**

Like running, rowing can improve cardiovascular fitness. Some of the muscle groups which are used in running are also used when rowing. Of course, rowing uses the arms and torso more than running does.

Indoor rowing machines can be programmed with workouts which are specifically geared towards improving different running distances, from sprinting to ultra-distance running. As with endurance running, rowing at relatively high intensity can promote mental toughness, giving you the ability to keep going when tired. It can also help you to create a greater tolerance to lactic acid build-up. Being a non-impact activity, rowing can be very useful if you are recovering from an impact-related running injury. You may still be in a position to maintain and develop your level of fitness.

If you are interested in rowing as a form of cross-training, be sure to adopt a good technique at the outset, pushing with your legs, pulling with your arms, all the time having a straight back. Ask a Personal Trainer at the gym to demonstrate a good technique and to check your posture as you row. Try not to overtrain on the rower. Enthusiasm is a very good thing, but be wary of doing too much too soon – build up steadily and gradually.

#### **Indoor Cycling**

As with rowing, cycling is a great way to raise your heart rate, and thereby increase your cardiovascular fitness. Being another non-impact activity, cycling can help you to continue to train if you are beset with an injury. Interval sessions, where you mix it up so that you cycle hard then cycle easy at regular intervals, can train you in a way which is similar to uphill running, but without the impact.

Cycling chiefly uses the quadriceps. Stronger quads can benefit your knees, providing greater support for them, and more balance can be created between the front and back muscles of the legs, bringing about greater stability. Overall, risk of a running-related injury can be reduced.

Gyms will usually have different types of cycles, for example the upright cycle and recumbent cycle. You might find one more comfortable than the other. You can also set the cycles to different levels of resistance, should you wish an easier or harder session, or mix it up with intervals, pedaling faster and slower repeatedly. A good motivator would be to take part in a spin class.

### **Strength-Training**

Free weights, such as dumbbells, barbells and kettle bells, as well as weights built into resistance machines, can be used as a good cross-training method to supplement your running. Studies have shown that strength training can lead to less need of oxygen when running. It follows that with greater oxygen capacity, a runner may run faster and longer than he has done before.

As muscles are strengthened, joints can be better protected and stabilized. The use of weights while doing squats can be particularly beneficial. Structural balance will be promoted, in turn reducing the risk of injury. Building some muscle can raise your metabolism, so that you burn more calories, making you lighter and potentially faster when running. Even at rest you will be burning more calories than previously.

Strength-training can also result in shorter recovery periods after longer runs. A runner can develop strength and stability simply by using their own bodyweight. Look out for our Core Stability Workshops and other workshops in our stores: [London](#) | [Edinburgh](#) | [Cardiff](#)

### **Enlisting the help of a Personal Trainer**

Gym members and non-gym members alike may wish to enlist the help of a Personal Trainer. A PT can assess your current level of fitness and draw up a plan, taking into account your personal goals and the time you have to devote yourself to them. In this way you can also feel safe in the knowledge that the programme is designed to stretch you but not overstretch you.