

CHIRUNNING REMINDERS - FOCUSES

POSTURE

Posture is the most important part of the ChiRunning technique and crucial in building strong core muscles. When your posture is correct, energy can flow through your body unhindered, in much the same way as that water will flow through a straight pipe more easily than a bent one. Running with your posture out of alignment can create tension, fatigue, discomfort, and even pain. When your body is aligned properly, your structure is supporting the weight of your body instead of your muscles having to do it.

When you are getting into correct Posture:

1.

Make sure feet are parallel and hip width apart

2.

Lengthen the back of your neck to straighten your upper body.

3.

Level your pelvis by placing one hand on your belly-button and your other hand on your sacrum, just above your tailbone. Don't clench your glutes while doing this exercise. Just isolate and work your lower abs. This will help level your pelvis and flatten your lower back. It's a great exercise for people with lower back problems, because it strengthens your abs while relaxing your back muscles. Do this exercise anytime you find yourself standing. The more often you remember to do it, the sooner your lower abdominal muscles will get strong enough to hold your pelvis in the correct position. Another tip to help you level your pelvis is imagine a string from your chin to your pubic bone and that the string is being shortened all the time. Keeping your pelvis level does two things: It builds strong core muscles (lower abdominals) and it brings your focus to your center, where your true power lies.

4.

Check for your shoelaces and this brings you into correct alignment. If you can't see your shoelaces it means your hips are too far forward. Correct this by placing your fingertips on your hip bones and pushing your hips to the rear while keeping your upper body directly over your feet. Once you can see your shoelaces, just lift your head.

If you are used to standing with your abdominals relaxed and your hips forward, this adjustment might make you feel like you're bent at the waist with your butt sticking out. Just look in a mirror and you will see that you are as straight as an arrow.

LEANING

Leaning allows gravity to pull you forward. This takes an immense amount of workload of your legs. You can either move for point A to point B by pushing yourself or by allowing gravity to pull you forward. The body at rest has gravity pulling down on its centerline. As soon as you fall forward, your center of gravity moves in front of your contact point with the ground.

Secondly, your lean is your accelerator. If you want to run faster lean more. If you want to run slower lean less. With ChiRunning, your speed has very little to do with the strength of your

legs. In fact it is quite the opposite. The more you can relax your hips and legs, the easier it will be to run faster and more efficiently. The key to leaning correctly is to practice leaning from your ankles, your whole body as a unit and at the same time keeping your lower legs limp.

In terms of injury prevention, leaning is crucial if you want to avoid knee injuries and shin splints. If you run upright, you'll land with your foot in front of your body which is like putting on the brakes with each stride... creating impact o your knees.

If you run with a heel strike, the ground coming at you creates a force to your legs with each foot strike. Also if you run with your body upright, you have to push off with your toes, which engages the shin and calf muscles. When you run this way o, you are using the smallest muscle group in your legs o propel your entire body weight forward. This Will overload the calf and shin muscles and can lead to shin splints, plantar fasciitis and Achilles tendon pulls.

When your foot lands correctly, just behind your center of gravity you impact with the road is reduced because your foot is moving toward the rear as it lands. Then, you run with less impact, less muscle usage and you cooperate with the pull of gravity.

LEAN DRILL

This drill helps you feel the whole body tilt forward as unit from the ankles as opposed to bending at the waist. Stand one foot step away from a wall. Get into your good posture and hold your arms out in front of you to hold your fall. Now drop your attention to your feet and relax your lower legs. Just allow yourself to fall forward and catch your fall with your hands hitting the wall. As you fall be sure to keep your posture straight and your ankles relaxed. If you are truly relaxing your ankles your heels won't come up off the ground. In fact if you are leaning correctly you won't feel any increase pressure on the balls of your feet. If you bend at the waist you will over work your back muscles. Keep your head in the correct position. Push yourself back upright and fall forward again. As you repeat this exercise, you should memorize two sensations.

1. What it feels like to keep your posture straight.
2. What it feels like to have that Column falling forward, pulled by gravity.

When you lean forward, use your lower abdominals to hold your posture straight not your glutes. Clenching your glutes will reduce your leg swing.

Memorize what it feel like to fall forward with the pull of gravity. Gravity becomes a horizontal pull, not a vertical pull. As you run, there is a window of balance that you will feel. This sweet spot in your lean is right at the balance point where you're not so upright that you have to push yourself with your legs, and not so far forward that you're holding your lean angle by tensing your lower legs.

HEEL LIFT

In ChiRunning, you won't be pushing yourself forward with each stride. In fact, all you have to do is pick up your feet to keep up with your forward fall. In terms of energy efficiency, it takes much less energy to pick up your feet than it does to push your body forward, which is what you do if you run in an upright position.

Start by shaking out your ankles to relax them. Lifting your heel is very different than lifting your entire foot. By lifting just your heel, you have to consciously release the ankle. As your heels come up your toes go down.

It is a heel lift rather than a push off. Don't exaggerate the heel lift. Just bring one heel up over the opposite ankle in a nice circular motion. Imagine you are pedalling a small bicycle and you are picking up on the pedals rather than pushing down. Keep a nice short, snappy stride and a nice quiet footstep; imagine you are creeping up on someone. Just peel your foot off the ground. If you can keep your lower legs relaxed it is impossible to push off from your toes. If you don't use the muscle you won't abuse it.

Keep your ankles nice and relaxed and your lower legs nice and limp. Remember to shake out your wrists and get the same feeling of relaxation into your lower legs. Keeping your lower legs limp at all times while running is the best way to prevent lower leg injuries.

Again anytime you are walking you can walk with limp, lower legs and you will become accustomed to it and be able to bring it into your running.

ARM SWING

Hold your arms at 90 degrees with fists gently closed and your thumbs on top. When you are running on the flat, the range of motion is, your hand comes back as far as your hip and your elbow comes forward to your hip. Never let your hands drop below your waist line, as it is much easier to swing a short arm than a long arm.

Try not to cross your centerline as it causes too much side to side movement. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed and imagine you are giving someone an elbow out behind you. Just concentrate on swinging the tip of your elbow out behind you, as it is much easier than focusing on your entire arm. Every now and then during your run drop your arms down by your side for about 10 seconds and this helps relax your arms and shoulders.

When you are running on the flat it is 50 percent upper body 50 percent lower body. If you are not using your arms enough, then you are asking your legs to do too much work.

When you are running up-hill the range of motion changes, you bring your arms from your hip, up to your chin and you physically make the upper body get you up the hill. Relax everything from the waist down and use your upper body to get you up the hill, so it is 80 percent upper body 20 percent lower body that is getting you up the hill.

BEGINNING RUNNING

Always before you start a run get into your good posture stance and start off your run nice and easy in first gear. Make sure you have a nice short snappy stride and keep your whole body nice and relaxed. The only part of your body that you should feel any tension is in your lower abs.

Ends

www.catherinamckiernan.com