A close-up of a sign

Description automatically generated

Criteria to initiate program:

* Proper alignment and eccentric control with bilateral and unilateral closed chain movements.
* Single leg press >70% on Limb Symmetry Index.

Key notes:

* Distance running places a tremendous amount of repetitive load on the body; therefore, incremental progression is essential in avoiding major setbacks in terms of pain, swelling, or injury.
* Run 2 to 3 times a week with 24-48 hours of recovery time in between sessions.
* Cross-train with elliptical, biking, or swimming between running sessions to build a strong cardiovascular base. Cross-training is the key to building endurance while allowing adequate recovery.
* Run on a soft gravel trail, grass or treadmill. Avoid concrete and asphalt, if possible.
* Continue with strengthening exercises 2-3 times a week while progressing running program- ideally strengthening exercises are performed after running or on a non-running day. It is important to have at least one complete rest day per week.
* Active warm-up of light jog, skipping, side shuffle, back pedal and high knees to initiate each running session with cooldown following. Ice for 10-15 minutes following session as pain and swelling dictate.
* Use proper shoe wear with change of shoes every 300-400 miles depending on running style, body weight, and surface. Consult with running shoe store for proper fit.

(Gary Gribble’s Running Store, The Running Well Store, Elite Feet, KC Running & Sports Medicine Store)

Patients will progress at different rates through the program dependent upon degree of inflammation, severity of injury, age, and prior level of fitness. Pain and swelling are the best guides to determining tolerance at each phase and whether one should progress to the next step.

Active Warm-up

Pre-running drills (15 yards down and back each): jogging, skipping, side shuffle, backpedal, high knees, butt kicks, grapevine

Dynamic stretching (10 yards down and back each): single leg RDL, quad stretch, side lunge, forward lunge, reverse lunge, knee tucks, glute stretch, inchworms

Cool Down

5-10 minutes global lower extremity stretching

Ice for 10-15 minutes as pain and swelling dictates.

Phase I: Intro Walk-Run Interval

Perform each level for 1-2 sessions advancing as pain, swelling, and conditioning permits.

* Level 1: 3 minute walk/2 minute run x 15-20 minutes
* Level 2: 3 minute walk/3-4 minute run x 15-20 minutes
* Level 3: 3 minute walk/5 minute run x 20-25 minutes

Phase II: Progressive Build-up

Perform each level for 2-3 sessions advancing as pain, swelling, and conditioning permits.

* Level 4: 2-3 minute walk/5-7 minute run x 20-25 minutes
* Level 5: 2-3 minute walk/8-10 minute run x 20-25 minutes
* Level 6: 2-3 minute walk/10 minute run x 25-30 minutes

Phase III: Continuous Running Build-up

Perform each level for 2-3 sessions advancing as pain, swelling, and conditioning permits.

* Level 7: 10-12 minute run/2 minute walk x 25-30 minutes
* Level 8: 12-15 minute run/2 minute walk x 30-35 minutes
* Level 9: 15-20 minute run/2 minute walk/10 minute run x 25-30 minutes

Phase IV: Endurance/Performance Phase

Perform each level for 2-3 sessions advancing as pain, swelling, and conditioning permits.

May begin to put short 1-2 mile runs on days between longer running sessions.

* Level 10: 3-4 miles (walk as needed)
* Level 11: 5-6 miles (walk as needed)
* Level 12: 6+ miles (walk as needed)

Not all runners will progress to Level 12 (18 miles/week). Match realistic goals with pre-injury fitness levels. If a patient desires to surpass their pre-injury/surgery running level, follow a well-designed program that allows for no more than 10% increase in total volume weekly until goal is achieved.