



# Running in the City

If New York City is your stomping ground, you can make it your running ground as well! The following tips will help keep you and your joints safe while running through the concrete jungle.

- Always wear **supportive running shoes** with enough cushioning. The constant pounding on city streets can be rough on your feet and knees.
- **Run on grass or packed dirt trails in the city's parks when possible.** These put the least strain on your joints. However, be aware of the path on which you are running. Rocks, holes, tree roots and other debris are likely to be found on these routes, making falls or ankle sprains more common.
- **Stay clear of concrete sidewalks.** They are the hardest surfaces on which you can run in the city and contribute to many overuse injuries. Some studies suggest that prolonged pounding of your feet on concrete can produce enough force to break red blood cells, decreasing your body's ability to carry oxygen.
- **Asphalt pavement is more forgiving.** Remember to go against traffic to see the cars headed toward you instead of having them sneak up from behind. Avoid listening to loud music on headphones so you are aware of the sounds of approaching cars and trucks from all sides of you.
- **Stay on level ground.** Road surfaces are curved in such a way as to allow water and debris to run off the sides and into the sewer. Moving outward from the center of a street, the pavement slopes downward creating a slanted surface the farther away you are from the center of the road. Running on the edge of street, forces the downhill leg to bend slightly inward. This action stretches your iliotibial band (ITB), a ligament that runs along the outside of your thigh, rubbing it against bone and causing inflammation. Alternate the sides of the street on your route so that you don't have the same leg consistently on the downhill slope.
- **Don't stop!** When running through the streets, don't stop at red lights. Instead, turn the corner and head down the block. You might end up with a more indirect and creative route, but you'll get there just the same. You can always cross the street at a later time when the traffic gods give you the green signal. Or avoid traffic lights altogether and head for a park!
- **Avoid streets that are highly trafficked and times of day when streets are more congested.** Because exercise requires faster, deeper breaths, you take more of the car exhaust into your lungs when you run. Carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide, all of which come from car exhaust, can both hinder your performance and harm your health, particularly for asthmatics. Carbon monoxide, the main component of car exhaust, interferes with the body's ability to carry oxygen and forces the heart to pump harder. Other pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, may irritate the eyes, constrict air passages and lower the body's resistance to colds and other respiratory illnesses. When you can, run first thing in the morning or after evening rush hour when traffic patterns are lighter.



- **In the summer months, work out in the early morning or after sunset.** Ground-level ozone is created when fuel gases already released into the air interact with sunlight. Levels are particularly high on days when the air is still, the sun is bright, and the temperature is warm. Ozone irritates breathing passages and can decrease the lung's working ability by damaging the cells lining the air spaces in the lungs. Damaged cells are shed and replaced, but if this depletion occurs repeatedly, the lungs could become damaged. Check the newspaper or weather.com for the ozone and weather reports and be aware of the quality of the air you're breathing! The Environmental Protection Agency has developed the Air Quality Index (AQI) to report levels of air pollution from level 0 to 300. At levels over 100, limit strenuous outdoor activity.

## **Places to Run in Manhattan**

*Central Park.* In the heart of Manhattan, spanning 59<sup>th</sup> Street to 110<sup>th</sup> Street, Central Park is the playground of many runners, walkers, bikers, and skaters. **Central Park Drive, or the "Big Loop,"** runs 6.1 miles (10km) within the confines of the Park. The complete run, which includes challenging hills, offers a change to typical flat running in the street. When the Drive is open to traffic (see below), the inner lane is reserved for runners, walkers, bikers, and skaters. Watch out - it can get crowded. To shorten your loop, cutoffs are possible at 72<sup>nd</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Streets. The **Reservoir** (between 86<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> Streets) run is a flat 1.6-mile (2.5 km) asphalt path with views of the city's skyline. For measuring your running distance, the course is marked in yellow on the inner edge of the path. There are also three distinct dirt **bridle path** loops (Northern Meadow Loop, Reservoir Loop, and Southern Spur), each between 1 mile and 1.5 miles long.

*Hudson River Park.* Manhattan's westside waterfront has become more accommodating to pedestrians and bikers in the last few years with the construction of separate asphalt paths from Battery Park to West 59<sup>th</sup> Street. The flat asphalt paths are separated from traffic on the West Side Highway by scenic planters, offering a buffer between you and traffic.

*Riverside Park.* The park, which runs from West 72<sup>nd</sup> to West 125<sup>th</sup> Streets along the Hudson River, is a multi-tiered haven on the Upper West Side. It provides smooth asphalt running paths on relatively flat grounds, with some gentle hills along the stone retaining wall. Stairs and benches can be found intermittently throughout the park for runners who wish to add a little more to their workout. Although less congested than Central Park, watch out for plenty of dogs, children, and strollers.

*East River Waterfront.* While plans for Manhattan's waterfront include connecting all the waterfront running/biking paths around Manhattan, currently the job is only partially done. The paths that have been completed from the South Street Seaport through Stuyvescent Cove on East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (about 3.5 miles) are separate, scenic asphalt paths for runners and bikers. Going south, the paths are mainly concrete, which is rough on the knees. North of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, the paths veer into the city away from the waterfront until the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge which brings runners back to the waterfront on the Bobby Wagner Walk and through Carl Schurz Park. Space can get tight so keep an eye out for others and the surroundings.

**T H E   W O M E N ' S   S P O R T S   M E D I C I N E   C E N T E R**

## Outdoor Running Tracks

*Thomas Jefferson Park.* 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue to FDR Drive, between East 111<sup>th</sup> and East 114<sup>th</sup>. Hidden within East Harlem are a new, state-of-the-art, all-weather 400m track and artificial turf field.

*East River Park.* East 6<sup>th</sup> Street and FDR Drive. Just a stone's throw away from the East River, this rubber-coated, all-weather 400m track provides views of the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges if you dare to take your eyes away from your running course.

## Central Park Drive hours:

CLOSED to Traffic: **Mon — Fri, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Mon — Fri, 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm**

**7:00 pm Friday – 6:00 am Monday** (all weekend)

Runners can run at any time, but the park is officially closed from 1:00 am – 6:00 am

## Calculate your running distance:

- 20 North-South street blocks = 1 mile.
- 3.5 North-South street blocks = 1 cross-town avenue block.
- Approximately 6 cross-town avenues = 1 mile.

