the pros and cons of running...
advice from a physical therapist

The running fad that began in the 1970s is still going strong for millions of Americans, and after a dip in the 1990s, the number of runners is climbing. For those who have been running regularly for a long time, pluses as well as minuses have emerged.

Compared with sedentary people, habitual runners have an increased life expectancy of two to seven years, a 30-40% lower risk of developing heart disease, and only half the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, according to Stanford University School of Medicine professor Dr. William Haskell. Even those who run just a half-hour (two to five miles) a few times a week reap improvements in strength, blood pressure, and other measures of physical health.

Research shows that those who run steadily, but carefully, and not through injuries, are often protected against arthritis and osteoporosis, and can delay significant disability for more than 10 years.

But the downside for runners is such leg and knee injuries as plantar fasciitis (heel pain), shin splints and sore knees.

Bruce Wilk, PT, OCS, recommends that any runner suffering from an injury consider consulting a board-certified physical therapist familiar with runners’ injuries. What should you expect when you arrive for your appointment?
If you make an appointment with a physical therapist, you should discuss the following:

- **independent evaluation:** A physical therapist should provide a thorough exam, an appraisal of the problem, and a plan for appropriate treatment on a regular basis.

- **close supervision:** The physical therapist should personally oversee all aspects of your treatment program.

- **goal-oriented treatments:** All treatment should be specifically designed to enhance strength, flexibility and/or endurance. The reason for each treatment should be explained.

- **discharge planning:** The program should include exercise and lifestyle recommendations for after the conclusion of your office visits and treatments in order to minimize the possibility of a recurring problem.

The material and information contained in this article is for information only and is not intended to serve as medical advice or consultation. Consult your personal physician before beginning any exercise program or self-treatment.