

# Cross Training Wrap Up



In general, runners can supplement 25-30% of their running “mileage” with cross training. It is still important to get 2-4 runs in per week if you are training for a specific event. A hill and/or speed workout, a tempo run and a long distance run during the week build a solid foundation. Some programs even specifically include “SOAA” or some other aerobic activity to get the cardiovascular benefits without the additional stress on the body. In the off season, weight training and/or more explosive type plyometric training can comprise a larger percent of the weekly exercise regime. In season, weight training should be more for maintenance rather than building strength and power. More recreational runners can opt for a blend of running and cross-training, year round. Something to keep in mind for both recreational and competitive runners is that REST DAYS are a KEY PART of any training program!

**AQUATIC CENTRE  
PHYSIOTHERAPY**

2121 Marine Drive - 2nd Floor, West Vancouver, BC V7V 4Y2  
Tel: 604.925.3408 Fax: 604.925.3409  
email: info@acphysio.com  
[www.acphysio.com](http://www.acphysio.com)

**OCEAN WALK  
PHYSIOTHERAPY**

1884 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, BC V7V 1J6  
Tel: 604.926.2886  
email: info@oceanwalkphysio.com  
[www.oceanwalkphysio.com](http://www.oceanwalkphysio.com)

Cross Training

Jill Calkin,  
B.Sc.PT, BHKin

604.925.3408

[www.acphysio.com](http://www.acphysio.com)

# Running

Training Guide - Vol.2



**AQUATIC CENTRE  
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# Cross Training

Typically, runners spend too much time pounding pavement. Running is an exceptionally repetitive activity that can cause systematic wear and tear in the body. To help counter overuse injuries and muscle imbalances, most physiotherapists highly recommend cross training. This can mean training different body areas and/or doing different types of activities that can give the running muscles an “active rest.”

## Benefits



### Helps build and balance muscle groups.

Most runners are lower body dominant, resulting in a relatively weak upper body and core. Runners even display imbalances within the lower body. The lateral stabilizers of the hip are often underdeveloped. Unless the runner includes hills and speed work in a program, the gluts and quads can be surprisingly weak compared to hip flexors and hamstrings. Cross training to target underutilized muscle groups or to use running muscles in a different way can help with these imbalances.

### Maintains or improves cardiovascular fitness.

Both aerobic (cardiovascular) and anaerobic activities can stimulate physiological changes in the body to deliver energy more effectively to working muscles. A mix of cross training activities can improve both energy systems to increase running performance.

### Reduces injuries.

As running is a high impact activity, choosing lower impact activities for cross training reduces the stress on joints. Balancing and strengthening various muscle groups will help with shock absorption, thereby decreasing load on the joints. Building up the core muscles is especially important for proper running biomechanics. A weak core can result in extraneous movement that not only leads to decreased performance, but also increases potential for injury. In particular, reduced shock absorption of the lower back, overworked hamstrings and poor tracking of the knee are all problems that may stem from a weak core.

### Allows for training while recovering from certain injuries.

Often running injuries require a break from running in order to heal. Cross training can use lower impact activities to maintain fitness without stressing the injured area. Alternatively, cross training can work out non-injured areas. For instance, many runners develop issues in their lower extremities. Biking or walking provides exercise with lower impact, whereas swimming provides cardiovascular benefits while primarily working the upper body.

### Creates a mental break.

Many runners burn out with the repetitive nature of their sport. This is especially true of long-distance road runners. Cross training allows for a mental break from the grind. Even trail running can offset the boredom of many miles on the road.

# Popular Cross Training Activities



**Swimming:** non weight-bearing, builds strength, endurance and flexibility, upper body focus

**Water running:** with or without floatation aids, uses the motion of running without the impact (Water Running Classes are available at West Vancouver Aquatic Centre and instructed by Aquatic Centre Physiotherapist - Denise Morbey - check the Leisure Guide for details)

**Cycling:** low impact activity that uses quads and glut muscles in a different way, builds cardiovascular fitness and allows for rapid leg revolutions to simulate faster stride rates

**Elliptical:** total body cardiovascular workout with lower impact - can work more major muscle groups in the legs by using both the forward and backward motion settings

**Walking:** good for recovery days – speed walking can help maintain aerobic fitness if injured

**Rowing:** excellent cardiovascular activity that strengthens the hips, gluts and upper body – as long as proper technique is used!

**Resistance training:** balances muscle groups and improves core to avoid fatigue and maintain form

**Yoga:** uses body weight for strength training and improves flexibility (which is notoriously poor in most runners)

**Cross country skiing:** skate or classic technique provides a full body aerobic workout that is low impact and that can help with flexibility – an indoor ski machine will yield similar results

**Inline or ice skating:** no-impact, gliding activity that works the quads, gluts and back muscles

**Other sports:** soccer, ultimate Frisbee, hockey, racquet sports, etcetera can get the lateral stabilizers working and anaerobic systems pumping - not the best choice for injured runners!

**Rest days:** essential to any running program – at least ONE DAY of COMPLETE leg rest per week!