**Running related injuries- what you need to know!!!! Prevention is crucial!!**

Increased physical activity does bring with it the risk of minor injuries but by taking a few precautions and being aware of the common types of injuries you might encounter, I’m hoping you can stay fighting fit all the way to race day whether is the 10 mile/ the half- marathon or the marathon!

This article, I will talk about common musculoskeletal type injuries and few tips to help you encounter the problems. Most running injuries tend to fall into two types:

1. Sudden injuries, such as sprains, as a result of a sudden impact or an awkward movement.
2. Gradual injuries as a result of overusing a particular part of your body, combined with poor technique question. They can also occur when you don’t allow your body to fully recover from the stresses and strains of training sessions

Some common running injuries are as follows:

1. Muscle Pull/Cramp - this can happen to almost any muscle in the body. While it can be hard to avoid this, your best approach is to stretch well and regularly, before and after training sessions and to build up your activity levels gradually as well as keeping hydrated throughout the day.
2. Runner’s Knee -  this is caused by the kneecap being misaligned, leading to it pulling to one side and rubbing on the other, causing cartilage to wear out.   Fluid then builds up, causing swelling in the affected knee. Treatment involves strengthening the quad muscles, and soft tissue massage.
3. Shin Splints – these cause pain in the muscles near the shin bones (front part of your lower legs) and can be as a result of a new training programme, switching shoe types, and training on harder surfaces or increased speed when running. Please stop running and decrease your pace when you have shin splint.
4. Achilles Tendonitis - inflammation of the tendon at the back of the ankle, usually due to overuse. Treatment is to minimise running or training until it feels better and to ice the tendon several times a day. If your pain is severe and occurs suddenly, please stop exercising and seek medical advice promptly as you may have the Achilles tendon tear.
5. Iliotibial Band Syndrome (ITBS) - this is caused by rubbing of the iliotibial band on the side of the femur (thigh bone) and symptoms can range from a stinging feeling just above the knee to swelling. This can occur if you increase your distance too quickly and should be treated by resting for a few days and reducing your distance training for a week.  If you have recurrent ITBS, a trip down to your physiotherapist is not a bad idea.
6. Stress Fracture- unlike a broken bone that happens as the result of a slip or fall, stress fractures develop as a result of cumulative strain on the bone. Runners most often have stress fractures in the shin bones, feet or heels. This injury is serious and it happens you need to avoid all exercise until it is fully healed. Usually the pain is severe particularly when you are weight bearing and mostly associated with swelling of the area involved.
7. Runner’s toe- develops because of repeated pressure downward on the toenails or irritation between the toenails and the shoe. If your shoes are too tight or too loose, the constant pressure and the ongoing movement of the foot damages the toe and toenail and sometimes resulting in either loss or partial loss of the toenail. Treatment usually resolves itself within a day or two of rest. You may want to tape the partially torn toenail until a new nail begins to form. You would need to see your GP if you see any signs of infection like redness, swelling or persistent pain that last longer than a few days. You can avoid this by wearing shoes that are at least one-half size larger than your street shoes.

Nearly all the injuries above are related to soft tissue injuries and usually will resolve with method of RICE- rest, ice, compress and elevate. If the pain and swelling persisted after a few days despite applying the technique above, then one should consult their GPs for further management. Train well, run well and listen to your body all the time!!!