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Training for a Marathon While Social Distancing

Attribute to: *Steven Mayer, MD, sports medicine physician at the Northwestern Medicine Running Medicine Clinic*

Can I train outdoors?

Whether or not you can train outside during the coronavirus pandemic is up to your local, state, and federal regulations. At this time in Illinois (and most states) you are allowed to run and exercise outside, provided you maintain social distancing recommendations. The only vital precaution to take while running outside at this time is to make sure that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people, whether that be runners, walkers, or cyclists. If you have to pass somebody on the trail, I would recommend doing that quickly, and staying out at least 6 feet ahead of them. If someone passes you on the trail, I would also recommend that you allow them to pass and then stay at least 6 feet behind them.



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What precautions should I take while running?

Exercise in Illinois is not currently allowed in children's parks because they do not want people touching the equipment. Most of the trail systems, however, are open and you can check with each county's website to determine if your specific trail or forest preserve is open. Fortunately, the majority are open, but beware the bathrooms have been locked. At this time you are not supposed to run with a partner, but they can certainly run on the trail with you as long as you stay 6 feet apart. Many times, even though you have to be far apart, it does provide comfort and camaraderie and is emotionally helpful just to be in the vicinity and on the same trail with friends.

I miss my running club. Any advice for staying motivated?

Another option that many thousands of people are using across the world right now is called Zwift. Zwift is a mobile app that you can place on your phone and/or laptop. With this app you are able to exercise virtually, whether it be cycling or running with your local friends or people across the world. This helps greatly with motivation and makes people feel less isolated as they train. There are other virtual running and cycling apps available as well. A second app that helps people with motivation and feeling part of a group is the Strava app. The Strava app allows you to download both real and virtual cycling and running training sessions you have done, and allows you to give and receive kudos from your friends. This can be a great source of motivation and social support during this time. A third opportunity athletes can consider is the Ironman Virtual Racing program. If you go to the Ironman website or facebook site at this time they are

setting up virtual racing for triathletes to be able to participate at home in actual races where you do receive metals, t-shirts and awards.

Should I be running right now?

Unfortunately, this is a very stressful time for most people. I would encourage people to work as hard as they can to avoid negative coping mechanisms and to keep fit and exercising. I believe exercise is emotionally and physically helpful, especially under periods of high stress and uncertainty.