RUN FOR LIFE.COM
"I'M A RUNNER!"

HEALTH BENEFITS OF RUNNING

BENEFITS OF RUNNING FOR LIFE

"We distance runners tend to value solitude and contemplation. We treasure our independence, private triumphs and individuality. We likewise hold that action trumps hyperbole; that hard work is the greatest teacher and that the journey often bestows more reward that the destination."

Grete Waitz

What you will find in this Article:

1. The Healthcare Crisis.

2. What the Mayo Clinic Says.

3. What Johns Hopkins Says.

4. A note of caution.

5. My story.

6.Findings from the National Runners Study.

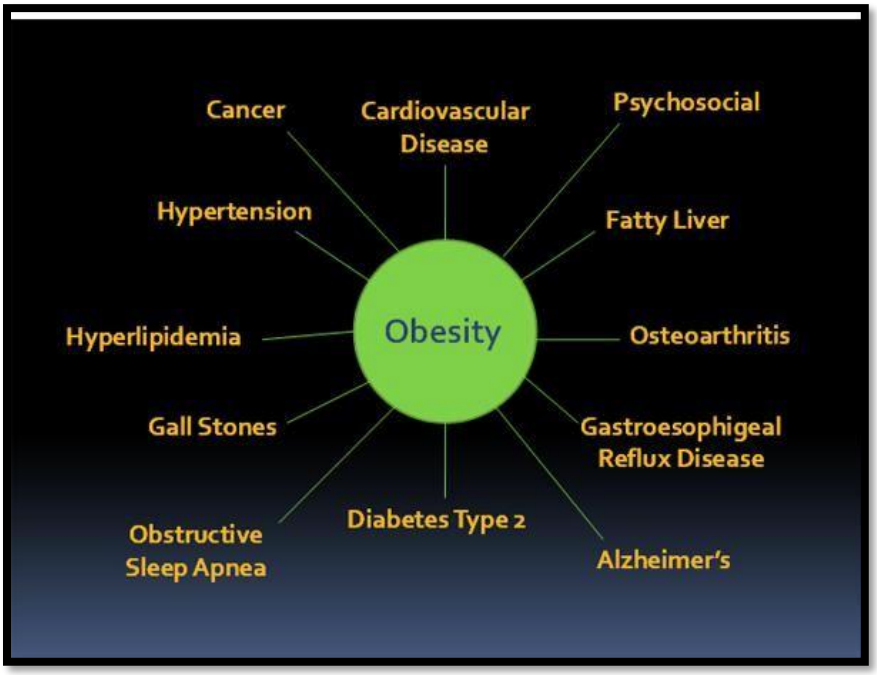
7. "Younger Next Year"

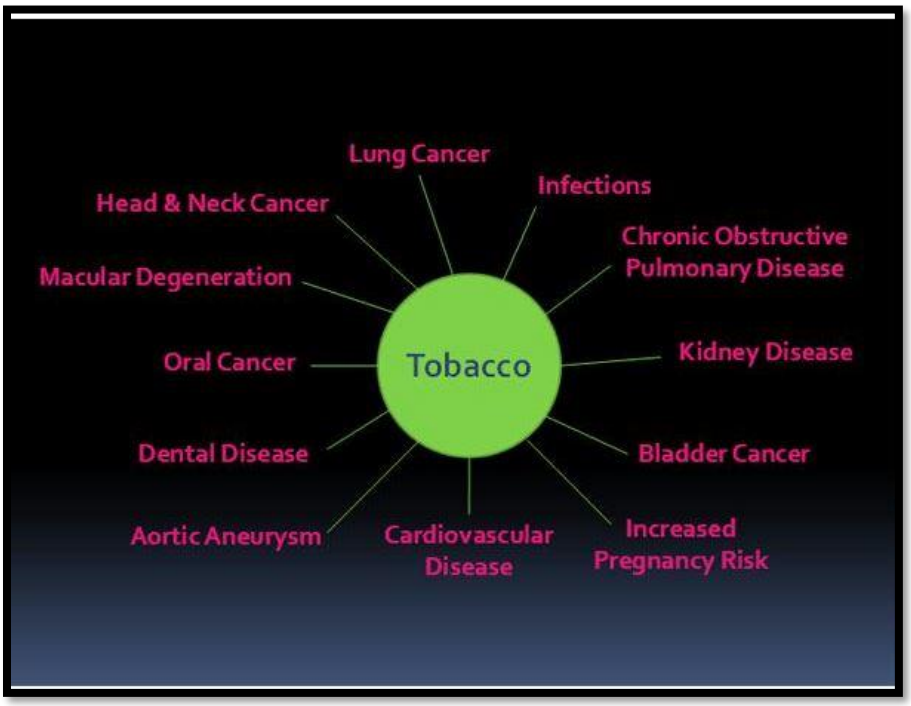
The Healthcare Crisis in America

Tobacco and Obesity

We cannot change our genome. But we can control what is controllable within our own unique health profile. A serious competitive runner cannot smoke and cannot/ will not be overweight. By simply focusing on achieving and maintaining a conditioning that is best we can be, our controllable health benefits accrue naturally. Vigorous exercise comes in several forms, all good. Run for life is surely one way to control what is controllable.

The following charts are reprinted with the permission of Craig C. Davis MD, FACP





".....the journey often bestows more reward than the destination." G.W.

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".....hard work is the greatest teacher." G.W.

Mayo Clinic:

The MAYO CLINIC Lists FIVE CORE COMPONENTS of WELLNESS:

- Aerobic Fitness
- Healthy Nutrition
- Weight Management
- Musculoskeletal Conditioning
- Stress Management

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Johns Hopkins:

Johns Hopkins has recently published a "Quick Reference for Prevention Tips".

You will need to get a copy to read the entire list for each disease, but the following is a list of each condition and where exercise, weight loss and smoking cessation are listed.

Exercise regularly-at least 30 minutes on most if not all days of the week.

Lose weight if you are overweight. Overweight is a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 or more.

If you smoke, quit.

	Exercise Regularly	Lose Weight Quit	Smoking
Hypertension	X	X	X
Gastro-esophagael Reflux Disease		X	X
Peptic Ulcers	X		X
Diverticular Disease	X		
Colorectal Cancer	X	X	
Type 2 Diabetes	X	X	
Depression	X		
Anxiety	X		
Stroke and TIA	X		
Memory Loss	X	X	X
Heart Disease	X	X	X
Cataracts		X	X
Age-related Macular Degeneration	X	X	
Lung Cancer	X		X
Back Pain	X	X	X
Osteoporosis	X		
Osteoarthritis	X	X	

How about that for a list of simple things everyone can do to maintain their health?

Note of Caution:

Special note on the health risks of running, especially serious competitive running:

Running has well documented health benefits. On the other hand it can be dangerous, even fatal. At large well attended races, runners die with some frequency. The base cause may well be pre-existing conditions but folks do die from the added stresses placed on our bodies. One should be encouraged to have regular physicals and to be sure your doctor is well aware of your running. Added screening tests may be warranted.

I have personally observed the benefits from this professional attention to my health needs. I recommend it for every runner but especially as we age.

"My Story"

This is titled "My Story" because it's written from my specific experiences. It is what running has given back as repayment for all the hours trying to shave a few seconds per mile off those race times.

1. There are two things everyone can do to improve their long-term health: don't smoke and don't become overweight, especially grossly overweight. Because I was a distance runner in high school and college I didn't smoke. Actually, I've never smoked. Maybe "fortunately" would be a better word. I avoided smoking even though many of my friends did because they knew I was a runner. Even in those days we all knew smoking wasn't good for your lungs. I never experienced the social pressure to smoke.

Becoming grossly overweight is a more recent problem. I'm appalled at the meal portions when going out to restaurants. I can eat the whole thing and go burn it off the next day. Most folks can't or don't. To reduce the obesity crisis folks either need to consume fewer calories or burn more. I don't want to minimize the difficulty in weight control especially for those prone to weight gain, but strictly from a factual perspective the problem and the solution is not all that complicated.

2. Anyone who runs to compete will definitely carry around a lot less weight. My weight stays around 132 to 136 pounds (60 to 61 kg). I'm 5' 9" (1.8 m) tall, which calculates to a body mass index of 19.5 to 20. When I punch these figures into a typical BMI calculator it says only 3 to 4% of the population has a lower index. What "blows me away" is they say: I'm "underweight". How can I be underweight? I can't imagine how I'd feel better weighing 10 or 20 pounds (5 to 10 kg) more. Obviously, who ever decided I'm "underweight" is not a competitive runner.

3. A doctor friend once told me to be careful, that there were only so many heart beats in a lifetime. I said I agreed but the way to calculate that was 1 hour of running at 140 BPM and the rest of the day at 70 BPM. That in fact created less beats per day, month, year etc. than an average of 90 BPM for the sedentary. (Actually 1750 vs. 2160 or almost 20% less!). He agreed with my calculations.

4. Somewhere around age 60 when size 36" (92 cm) pants were too tight I developed stomach problems. A doctor said I had gastro reflux disease and prescribed a drug to be taken daily. Now when size 30" (76 cm) pants are too loose there's no GERD and it's bye bye drug. My current doctor says "fit slender people have much less GERD".

5. My mother suffered from age related macular degeneration late in life. I asked my eye doctor if that was hereditary to which he answered: "Yes but aren't you a runner?" Running is very helpful in delaying its onset, he told me. Consistent vigorous exercise and not smoking definitely aid prevention of this terrible life altering disease.

6. Clearly there are diseases which vigorous exercise will not benefit. Autoimmune, neurological and most malignancies for example will almost certainly not be helped by running. But routinely keeping the blood flowing vigorously through our bodies may help delay the onset of some. As time goes on and medical science progresses, we'll learn where there's positives and where there's not. But from what I've learned

from my body, I don't see the downside. So I'll focus on doing my best in competition and let the medical implications be what they may be.

7. I wonder if the politicians and lobbyists talking about "healthcare" instead of "sickcare" really understand the difference and are prepared to make the changes themselves. It seems like many of these same folks look very overweight. Rapid movement of the tongue is not an aerobic exercise.

8. Perhaps serious running will not increase a person's life expectancy. But you will surely live better for however long you do live.

9. One really great aspect of running is it doesn't cost much. There's probably no other sport or exercise where the cost is so low and the benefits are so great. Something around $200 buys everything that's needed.

10. Runners are a great bunch. You will almost never meet a serious runner you won't like.

How much should we run?

Read some key findings from the National Runners' Health Study, a more than 20 year research initiative covering over 120,000 runners conducted by Paul Williams, Lawrence

Berkeley National Lab:

Said Williams, "This study suggests to us there are substantial benefits to more vigorous exercise above and beyond the current recommended guidelines. There does not seem to be any diminishing return before running 40 miles (64 km) per week. **With exercise, the greater the investment the greater the rewards.**"

Among women runners, vigorous exercise paid off in a range of significant health benefits. A more heart healthy cholesterol profile was obtained. Weight was significantly reduced, particularly around the waist and hips. And modest improvements were observed in blood pressure.
Importantly, the study found the more miles a woman runs, the greater was the benefits. That was true up to 40 miles (64 km) per week.

Williams and Moussa report that the **benefits of running 40 miles (64 km) per week versus 10 miles (16 km) can be dramatic.** Women in the 40 mile club reduce their risk of dying from cardiovascular disease be an estimated 45%. Overall, their risk of developing heart disease is an estimated 29% less.

The study.....involved 35 pairs of identical twins..... One twin averaged 39 miles (62 km) per week while the other averaged less than 5 miles (8 km). **Much to their surprise, researchers found that a twin's weight was unrelated to their obviously similar genetics, exercise appeared to be the determining factor.**

"There's no lack of information about the benefits of exercise" says Paul Williams. **"What's lacking is motivation".**

For much more information on the benefits of vigorous exercise, visit http://www.lbl.gov and search for Paul T. Williams.

"Younger Next Year" is a great book by Chris Crowley and Henry S. Lodge M.D.

There's lots of great information in the easy to read book. There's a very appropriate page in the appendix titled:

Harry's Rules

1. Exercise six days a week for the rest of your life.
2. Do serious aerobic exercise four days a week for the rest of your life.
3. Do serious strength training, with weights two days for the rest of your life.
4. Spend less than you make.
5. Quit eating crap.
6. Care.
7. Connect and commit.

How's that for 7 great concepts for good health? My own experience would say the concepts in this book are very appropriate. It further emphasizes the benefits of vigorous exercise. I agree you can become younger next year as long as you are gaining fitness. Once you become really fit you probably can't become younger but you can delay the normal aging process by significant amounts.