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Play it Safe to Prevent Running Injuries

Brian caught the running bug in high school and never looked back. Over the last 30 years, he's completed more than 80 marathons, including Boston, Chicago and New York and more than 200 other races like 10Ks, triathlons, etc. He's run the Marine Corps Marathon 19 times in row. When he's not training for his next race, this 48-year-old Arlington father of three is a distinguished dentist with a thriving practice in Washington, DC.

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Dr. Kittredge performed an arthroscopy of the knee, including a microfracture treatment to remove significant cartilage damage from behind Brian's patella. The outpatient surgery took place the day before Thanksgiving and Brian was back at work the following Monday.

His knee healed quickly, too. "I thought I'd be off it for three to four months, but after just a few sessions of physical therapy I was running again on January 2," he recalls. "I ran in the National Marathon in March, the Cherry Blossom 10-mile race in April and completed the Wisconsin Ironman that summer." This accelerated approach reflects Dr. Kittredge's personal philosophy. "As a compulsive, obsessive runner who has run multiple marathons and heard all the stories, I'm very aggressive about letting people run as long as it is safe," he says. "Most of these injuries are mistakes in training."

Running is an excellent form of exercise, but it subjects the body to considerable stress. Each time a runner's foot hits the ground it generates forces equivalent to at least three times the body's weight. Injuries are an unfortunate, but all too common, occurrence. Although most are not as serious as Brian's, they can cause pain and discomfort in the hips, knees, legs, ankles and feet.

"At Commonwealth, the most common injuries we see are iliotibial band syndrome and trochanteric bursitis—both resulting from a tight IT band—heel pain such as plantar fasciitis, and stress fractures," says Daniel Thompson, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon specializing in cartilage restoration procedures, arthroscopic knee surgery and joint replacement.

Stress fractures typically occur in runners trying to increase their mileage for a specific goal; high school athletes ramping up too fast for sports teams or playing multiple sports seven days a week; people training for marathons; or weekend warriors launching fitness routines. Female runners who are amenorrhoeic and don't make enough estrogen for strong bones are also susceptible.

Simple, common-sense strategies can prevent many of these injuries. It's important to follow a training program, increase mileage gradually, stretch before and after workouts, modify speed and distance, cross-train if possible, and wear high-quality, well-fitting running shoes.

"People should consult an orthopaedic surgeon when they are running through pain," Dr. Kittredge says. "Most runners will push through anything just to get their workout in. But 'no pain, no gain' only serves to worsen an injury." Dr. Thompson agrees, adding, "Any new injury



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that keeps a person from running should be evaluated, especially if it's not better after a few days."

In addition to surgery for more serious problems, Commonwealth Orthopaedics offers a wide range of treatment options for running injuries—everything from training tips and injury-prevention counseling, to medication, physical therapy and gait analysis (see sidebar on page 7).

Three years after his surgery, Brian continues his active lifestyle, skiing at Alta this spring, and running without pain. In April, he's headed back up Heartbreak Hill, having qualified for his sixth Boston Marathon.



Ben W. Kittredge, MD, earned his medical degree and completed his residency in orthopaedic surgery at the University of Virginia. He performed his internship in general surgery at Roanoke

Memorial Hospital and completed fellowship training in sports medicine at Jefferson College and Pennsylvania Hospital. Dr. Kittredge is board certified in orthopaedic surgery and a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.



Daniel E. Thompson, MD, earned a BS in Biomechanical Engineering from Stanford University. He earned his medical degree from the University of Mississippi School of

Medicine in Jackson. Dr. Thompson completed both his general surgery internship and orthopaedic residency at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, DC. He is board certified in orthopaedic surgery.

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