

## Are You An Unbalanced Runner?

Most people think runners are unbalanced. Despite what your mental state might be, your body may not be in complete alignment. Structural or muscular imbalance can lead to injury and pain. The area most affected by structural imbalance that can have a big effect on your running is your pelvis. If you have hip pain, most likely something is off kilter. There are several injuries that result in hip pain, but a common yet often overlooked cause is pelvic misalignment. Frequently diagnosed as a leg-length discrepancy, it can actually be a temporary condition brought on by poor pelvic alignment. Leg-length discrepancies are rarely the result of having one leg bone that's truly longer than the other. Most likely it's caused by a tight hamstring or iliotibial band that pulls on one side of the pelvis. Runners with this imbalance overcompensate by favoring one leg, which leads to injury and pain. Without a proper diagnosis the tendency is to go right to orthotics, missing the true underlying issue which can be helped with corrective and preventative treatment.



What leads to pelvic misalignment? Strength imbalances can pull the hips out of alignment. Running on the same side of the road makes one leg to reach down a little farther than the other since most roads have a slight camber. Poor posture from sitting slightly to one side, leaning the same way on a counter or table while standing, and driving, which uses one foot, can be factors in misalignment. Habits of imbalance which is a tendency to carry a purse, laptop or gym bag on the same side, and putting the phone to the same ear and using your shoulder to hold it. Pelvic misalignment and the functional leg-length discrepancy it creates can be the source of several common running injuries: Hamstring Strain and Piriformis issues due to imbalance, IT Band Syndrome with a combination of weak hips and glutes, Runner's Knee from excessive force on one side, and Achilles Tendonitis together with poor strength and mobility in the lower leg.

There are measures you can take to help prevent hip alignment issues or recurrences. Run in the middle of the road when possible or alternate sides of the road. Do strength training with single-leg exercises to address muscular imbalances. Maintain good posture during the day, which will benefit your running and overall health. Be conscious of your body habits. If you instinctively carry items on the same side all the time get in the habit of alternating sides.

If you have pain in your hips during and after running, a trained sports injury specialist can properly identify the source of the injury. If poor hip alignment is the culprit, the goal is to relieve the muscle

tightness and imbalance that are causing pain and discomfort. While physical therapy works on strength and mobility of the pelvic area, a sports injury specialist will also address the muscular imbalances that are causing the hip misalignment. Active Release Technique® is highly effective in treating muscle tightness and imbalances. A trained ART provider pinpoints the problem area and the underlying cause contributing to the injury, then treats not only the hip alignment, but the soft tissues, muscles and connective tissues that are contributing to the problem and not just the areas affected by the tightness and imbalance.

ART stimulates repair and accelerates healing by restoring normal tissue texture and reestablishing full flexibility, balance and stability. What makes ART® different from physical therapy and other treatments is how it identifies and heals scar tissue adhesions that are interfering with normal strength and flexibility, not simply stretching out the muscles. ART is completely natural and non-invasive and can prevent the need for more invasive treatment.