

Breathe Better & Run Better

By Dr. Jon DeGorter, DC



Running uses more than just leg muscles. Those that power your breath are just as important. Greater lung capacity allows for deeper breaths, giving you more efficient oxygen transfer which will improve running performance. Good posture is a key factor in better lung capacity. Good posture begins with proper alignment, which impacts your whole body, not only helping to regulate your heart rate and blood pressure, but also reinforces proper body mechanics that affect your running strength and endurance. Your posture is an important element of your running form, letting you move more efficiently, avoid injury.

The first step is to become aware of how you hold your body. With practice, good posture while running becomes natural and does not require as much attention. A tall, expansive posture improves your breathing and thereby your running performance. Everyone can make some improvement to their form and run a little better. See which type of runner you are and how to improve your posture, breathing, and performance:

Hunched Runner – runs with a rounded upper back and barely lifts their knees, causing the feet to shuffle. It's really hard to lift the knees when your body's center of gravity is ahead of the vertical plane. Hunched runners tend to have arms that cross the front of the chest, the hands carried close to the body in a protective manner.

Fix: Stand up tall, elongating the spine and roll the shoulders back so the scapula move down. This expands the chest and creates more space for the diaphragm to expand with each breath. Move the hands down and away from the chest until the forearms are parallel with the ground and can swing freely forward and back without crossing in front of the torso.

Head-First Runner – runs with a chin that juts out and rounded upper back. This is usually accompanied by shoulders that collapse forward and disengaged core muscles in the abdominals and back.

Fix: Draw the chin in until you notice the back of the neck lengthen and upper back straighten. Tilt the pelvis back and draw the tailbone down, engaging the abdominals. Squeeze the shoulder blades together and down so that the upper chest opens, creating more space between the ribs.

Sitting Runner – runs with dropped hips, putting their center of gravity behind the vertical plane. Their knees are bent and upper body very upright. In this position, the quadriceps compensate for disengaged glutes. The sitting runner has difficulty fully extending the rear leg during the push-off phase. This makes them shorter in stature and unable to lift the feet very high off the ground.

Fix: Bring your center of gravity forward by leaning forward from the ankles while keeping the body straight and not bending at the waist. Lengthen through the spine to elongate the back, making you feel tall and expansive. This forward-leaning position engages the glutes, the most powerful running muscle, allowing you to fully extend the rear leg during push off.

Think about your posture on your next run, to loosen out built up tension in your shoulders and neck and refocus on your run, especially when running long distances because with longer mileage comes greater fatigue, and you'll find yourself running sloppy, which only reinforces your feeling of exhaustion. Reset your posture with a chiropractic adjustment. When your spine and posture are out of alignment the added strain and stress on your body limits your mobility and ability to breathe properly.

Jonas Chiropractic Sports Injury Care

Our goal is helping every athlete reach their personal performance goals. We design athlete-specific treatment plans that take into consideration your individual training goals, using joint mobilization techniques with soft tissue repair in addition to the strengthening and coordination regimens offered by physical therapy. As athletes we understand the need to repair injury without losing valuable training time.

Active Release Technique® involves intense active movement-based massage treatments, which sets it apart from passive massage techniques and physical therapy treatment. **ART®** promotes faster recovery, restoration of normal tissue function and helps prevent injury by reducing scar-tissue build-up and promoting ideal muscle length through the healing process. While other therapies can provide relief, **ART®** combined with specific stretching and exercise heals the tissue in the shortest time with the lowest incidence of re-injury.

Dr. Jon DeGorter is the USATF-Long Island Chair of the Sports Medicine Committee, and part of the Jonas Chiropractic Sports Injury Care team. Dr. Jon specializes in treating runners and triathletes — keeping athletes doing what they love to do.