

POPSUGAR.

5 Tips to Stay Fit While Injured

For the last 10 years of my life, I've defined myself as a runner...and was obsessed with the sport. So, come December, when a surgeon diagnosed my excruciating hip pain as a femoral neck fracture (simply, a crack in my hip joint), I was devastated to say the least. I gave up my goal of Boston qualifying at the Los Angeles Marathon with just 7 remaining weeks of training and instead, took up crutches for 4 months while my fracture healed.

Yes, the first few weeks, I inevitably sulked around.

During these first few weeks, though, I also became concerned about how I was going to remain in decent shape without the ability to use the lower half of my body. Bitterness transitioned into a sense of determination to figure out how I could stay healthy and fit.

While every injury is different than the next – and definitely not all concentrated in the lower body – I wanted to provide people with a beginner's guide to staying fit while injured... and I promise, it does get better.

1. Focus on strength training & set specific goals.

Concentrate on areas you can work on without any pain – for me, abs and arms. Set specific goals to maintain this commitment. For example, try to hit a specific amount of pushups or pull-ups! Strength training pays off post-injury by maintaining a level of endurance and helping your running form.

2. Stretch it out.

I suggest meeting with either a physical therapist or yoga instructor to safely decide what you can stretch and what you can't. Stretching will help your sore shoulders and arms if you are on crutches and will keep your mind and body refreshed and sharp. Similar to strength training, stretching will positively impact your running form when you're back on your feet.

3. Make sure to eat – but, eat well.

This was a shocker for me, but, injuries cause you to burn more calories than an average person. Your body is using energy to heal itself – and crutches are a cardio and strength workout in themselves. Up your calorie intake to fuel your recovery – but make sure its valuable calories. Stick to foods like leafy greens, salmon, yogurt and sweet potatoes, which have an optimal amount of minerals and nutrients to drive bone strength and physical healing. Toss in Vitamin C and Vitamin D supplements to fuel recovery and strength too.

4. Sleep!

Use your extra downtime to sleep. Sleeping a proper amount (I'm personally an 8-10 hours/night girl) curbs cravings, prevents fat gain and ensures you are more energetic and healthy.

5. Take your time.

Yes, definitely strength train and stretch, but realize when you are uncomfortable and stop. Realizing when you need to take a break or slow down your pace prevents any further injury and ultimately keeps your body fit and back on the road to health.