

When To Switch From Running To Walking

Even if you have demonstrated the ability to perform well at 5k, 10k, half-marathon, or marathon, and/or are able to jog (instead of walk) at fat max heart rate, you are going to want to de-emphasize jogging and do more walking if any of the following road hazards apply:

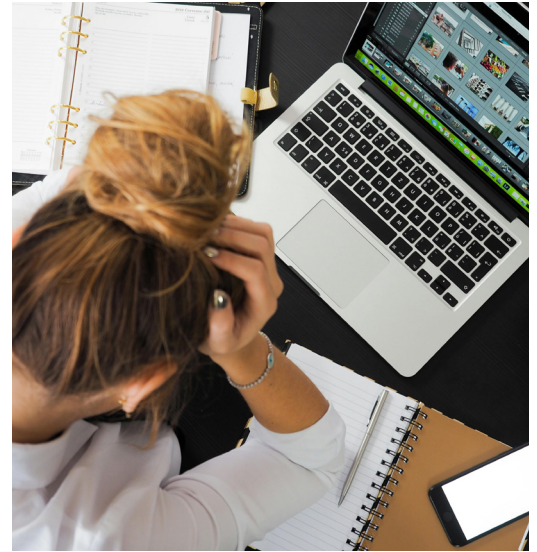
Overfat: If you qualify as overfat with a waist circumference of more than double your height (e.g., 66" tall with more than 33" waist), you must take drastic action to minimize all life stress factors. Slowing down your endurance training pace will minimize stress hormone production and improve fat metabolism. You can still perform brief, high-intensity strength and sprint sessions that last 30 minutes or less. Just no chronic cardio!

Injuries: Emphasizing walking is essential if you've had recurring overuse injuries over the past few years. You'll still get excellent aerobic conditioning, and you'll build more resilience in your joints and connective tissue for better adaptation to the impact load of running. Remember, walking is only one-times bodyweight load (one foot is always on the ground), while running can be 3-4 times bodyweight impact load on every stride.

Crappy diet: Fueling endurance efforts with processed foods and indulgent treats is a recipe for long-term health disturbances, and elevated disease risk. You also perform well below potential, because diet influences recovery and fat burning capability. Slow down, clean up your diet, and build your fat burning machine the right way.



Inferior general health: If you're battling a chronic illness—especially those in the fatigue or autoimmune categories, experiencing an inordinate amount of life stress, have mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression, regularly use recreational drugs or prescription drugs, have poor dietary habits, travel frequently through time zones, work extremely long hours, have major sleep disturbances such as caring for infants or doing shift work, or experience other energy, hormonal, or metabolic challenges, you must urgently reduce your overall level of exercise stress. This means emphasizing low-level aerobic conditioning and avoiding high-stress workouts. Walking helps you cope with the stresses of life; running adds to your life stress scoreboard.



Regression in MAF test results: If you notice a plateau or a regression in test results over time, you'll want to lower your MAF heart rate by five or ten beats and/or exercise well below fat max heart rate for at least a month, and continue with a lower fat max until you notice improvement in test results. There are only two reasons for a regression in aerobic performance: detraining, or overly-stressful life and exercise patterns. Make adjustments when you see a clear pattern of slower test results and/or feeling slower, sluggish, and generally less peppy at workouts.



While walking may seem less exciting and less effective than endurance running, exercise physiology suggests otherwise. For the vast majority of recreational runners, slowing down generates improvements in aerobic conditioning, fewer injuries, and reduced risk of burnout.