

3883 Motor Avenue
West Los Angeles, CA 90084
(213) 559-6900

1818 N. Lake Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91104
(818) 797-6441

LEARN TO WALK BEFORE YOU RUN

PROPER POSTURE CAN IMPROVE RUNNING AND PREVENT INJURY

Hippocrates wrote about it. Ballet dancers dream of it. West Point demands it. Runners must achieve it. What is it? Good posture.

Good posture is everything. Without it, you are in a state of stress and prone to injury.

Runners suffer injuries simply because they don't know how to run. In fact, they don't even know how to walk. According to Leroy Perry, D.C., "From the moment we take our first breath, gravity is trying to overcome our erect posture and literally put us on all fours. In order to deal with gravitational pull, we must establish good posture and how to maintain it. Good posture in a standing position is an even weight-bearing distribution from your heels to the balls of your feet and toes. The center should be slightly in front of your ankles and where your foot and ankle join.

"The average person, however, stands on his heels, putting pressure on one-third of his foot, instead of evenly distributing the weight."

Efficient running depends on proper walking, which in turn depends on balanced posture in a standing position. If you follow the procedures we have described here, you can correct improper standing posture and thus improve your walking and running ability.

IMAGERY TO IMPROVE POSTURE

Close your eyes and imagine five balloons attached to your body: one to the top of each side of your pelvis, one to each pectoral muscle, and one to

the top of your head. Imagine that they are full of helium. What is your favorite color? Blue? Every time you see the color blue or any derivative of blue, imagine the balloons filling with more helium. As a result, your pelvis starts to rise, your chest starts to lift, your neck elongates, you feel taller. As your pelvis lifts, your back will become less tense; as your chest rises, your shoulders and upper back relax, and as your head lifts, the back of your neck relaxes.

This may all seem rather silly to you, images of balloons teaching proper posture. How effective is the technique? Just ask Rick Monday, center-fielder with the Los Angeles Dodgers, or Suzie Chaffee, Olympic skier, or any number of famous athletes. They are all using this technique with great success. Others in all walks of life - actresses and actors, musicians, and businessmen - have adopted the technique. So pick your favorite color balloon and begin. Remember what Albert Einstein said: "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

WALKING PROPERLY: THE PUSHER GOOD!

Now, using your newly developed posture, try this walking technique. Remember the blue balloons. Lean forward about five degrees and push off with your back foot, between the first and second toes, using a flexed foot and a good toe grip. Alternate each leg between a standing and a swing phase. The supporting leg pushes off and the other leg swings forward, landing one-half inch forward of the back of the heel. This creates a braking action as the weight is over the ball of the foot. For fluidity of

movement, the push-off must exceed the strength of the braking motion. Be sure to keep your sternum slightly

forward of the pubic bones and hold your head relaxed between your shoulders.

Your arms should be relaxed and swinging, with the forward arm rising to the level of the seventh rib while the other arm swings backward, the hand grazing the hip and rising to the level of the waist. Always swing your arms in opposition to your leg movement. (Right arm and left leg move forward simultaneously.) You can walk rapidly by adjusting your arm swing to include a flexed elbow. This action shortens the arc of the swing, making fast walking easier and more relaxed. ▀

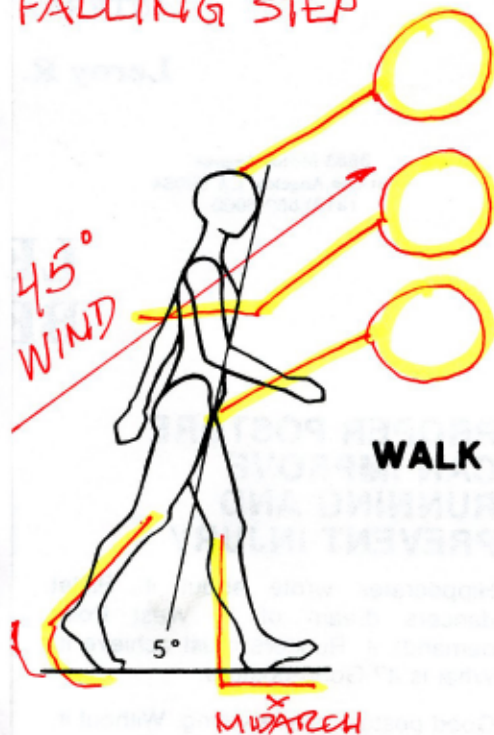
IMPROPER WALKING: THE PULLER BAD!

The puller leans too far back on his heels and, therefore, does not push off effectively. Because foot strike and braking action overpower push-off, stress is transmitted to every joint in the body. This stress particularly affects the heel, foot, knee, and lower back. The puller's arm swing is usually shallow, rotary, or nonexistent, which compounds the problem and increases the stress on the body.

If you fall into the category of the puller, you can correct these bad habits and reduce the stress on your body. All you do is practice the imagery exercise, think of the blue balloons, and begin walking the way we have described above. Another helpful technique is to practice walking backward, using proper posture. (The balloons again.) By consciously controlling the backward walk, you can learn to control your normal walk.

BY DR. LEROY R. PERRY JR.

FALLING STEP



- a) Plant foot ~~3/4 in.~~ before heel
- b) Push off with ball and toes of back foot
- c) Lean body 5° forward
- d) Swing arms, relaxed like a free pendulum
- e) Look straight ahead, not at the ground

ELLIPTICAL - GOOD!
WALKING IN SAND
AT BEACH / - GOOD!



- a) Plant foot $3/4$ in. before heel
- b) Push off with ball and toes of back foot
- c) Lean body 10° - 20° forward
- d) Swing arms, relaxed, like a free pendulum
- e) Look at the horizon, not the ground
- f) Relax hands and jaw