

2012 REASONS TO START RUNNING THIS YEAR

By Rob Maxwell

I'm sure I could come up with 2012 reasons to start running, but due to space and time, I'll come up with 12. With the obesity problems we have in the U.S. right now (and the numbers only getting worse - projected that 70% of our population will be overweight or obese by 2020), I can't stress enough how important it is to get moving. But 12 is a nice number, so let's focus on 12 and multiply that number by 1000 for importance!

1. **Prevent obesity.** Nothing burns calories at the time like running. Walking is great, but we burn even more calories when we run. Cycling is great, but we burn even more calories when we run. There are what are called metabolic equations you can use to figure out exactly how many calories you burn when you run. It's roughly 100-150 calories per mile, depending on your weight.
2. **Lose weight!** Isn't this the same as above? Yes, basically. But prevention and loss are two different things. When you want to lose weight, there is no better way (no other way) than to move more and eat less. As stated above, running burns a ton of calories.
3. **Improve your cardiorespiratory fitness.** The heart is a muscle too. It needs to be exercised. Running improves our cardiorespiratory system as well as, if not better than, any form of cardiorespiratory exercise.
4. **Lower resting blood pressure.** Resting blood pressure can be lowered by about 10-15 points (both systolic and diastolic) through cardiorespiratory exercise. That's better than taking medication!
5. **Lower risk factors for heart disease.** It lowers many, but most notably it lowers your LDL cholesterol and raises your HDL cholesterol, which are key contributors to heart disease. Running improves both.
6. **Reduce stress.** Muscle tension is created by stress. One of the ways we can beat this is by using our muscles. If we use our muscles, we can burn up negative energy which causes stress. I can go for a run and be stressed and come back feeling much better.
7. **Improve circulation.** Let's keep that blood moving. Cardiorespiratory exercise is a great way to improve circulation.
8. **Reduce risk for arthritis.** Yes, you heard me! Keeping your body weight down and using your muscles and body is a great way to NOT have arthritis! Use it or lose it! Sure, running or any other sport can be abused. But if you're training correctly (fix biomechanical problems that may crop up, and follow a sensible build up plan), then it reduces your risk. Let me ask you this: How many lifetime runners do you know have knee replacements? Maybe a couple? I don't know any. Remember, running is a great way to manage weight, and the heavier we are, the more of a candidate we are for arthritis.

9. **Be happy!** Running makes your body's natural endorphins come out, and these pleasant hormones make you happy! I can't think of how many times I've been grumpy and not feel like running, only to go for a run and have my mood drastically changed! Heck, this is way cheaper than therapy!
10. **Give you an arena to compete in.** Competing is natural and healthy. And too many of us don't have sports to compete in after high school and/or college. Running gives us an opportunity to get to that local 5K and let those competitive juices flow.
11. **Build self-esteem.** I've seen so many runners lose weight by running and eating healthy, and they seem like totally different people later on. Achieving goals helps us know we can achieve other goals. Running a 5K or marathon when you couldn't before gives your self-esteem a nice boost, telling us that we did it!
12. **Increase energy.** Cardio respiratory exercise, and really all exercise, gives you a boost in energy. It doesn't leave you feeling zapped unless you've trained improperly and have done too much too soon. It has the opposite effect; it raises your energy levels. Like right now for me! I was dragging when I woke up but went for my Tuesday run and I've been loaded with energy all day!

So there you have it! The ~~2012~~ reasons to run in 2012! I hope you join me on this road to happy and healthful running.