HARTZ
Physical Therapy

FUEL FOR YOUR RUN

A Monthly Running Newsletter
October 2026

Welcome to Fuel for Your Run! Each month, we'll break down a different running topic — including injury prevention, training, strength, fueling, running form, racing, and more.

My goal is simple: help you train healthier, smarter, and stronger.

A LITTLE ABOUT ME



I'm Noah Esbenshade, a physical therapist, strength and conditioning coach, run coach, and running gait analyst. My love for running and endurance sports started after college. I grew up playing many sports, but soccer was my favorite, and I played soccer and a short stint of lacrosse at Grove City College.

After college, I wanted a new challenge, so I signed up for a triathlon and quickly caught the endurance sports bug. Since then, I've continued to train and compete in triathlon while learning more about training, racing, and staying healthy.

As a physical therapist, I also see how hard it can be to train for a race without injury or other setbacks. I started Fuel for Your Run to share what I've learned and help make sense of the running advice you see online.

🔥 HOT TAKE OF THE MONTH

Heel Striking Is Not Inherently Bad

If you spend much time on social media, you've probably heard that you shouldn't heel strike. You may have heard that heel striking creates more force, slows you down, or increases your risk of injury. But is that really true? Not necessarily.

1. MANY FAST RUNNERS HEEL STRIKE

About 89–94% of recreational runners use a rearfoot, or heel, strike. Even among some of the fastest marathon runners in the world, more than half use a rearfoot strike.[1–3] Heel striking clearly does not stop runners from running fast.

2. CHANGING YOUR FOOT STRIKE DOESN'T REMOVE THE LOAD

Running puts stress on your body no matter how your foot hits the ground. Changing to a forefoot strike can change where that stress is felt — heel striking tends to load the knee and hip more, while forefoot striking tends to load the ankle and calf. Neither is automatically better. Some research has even found more stress on the shin bone with a forefoot strike.[4–5]

3. HEEL STRIKING DOESN'T MEAN INEFFICIENT RUNNING

Another common claim is that heel striking creates more braking and makes you less efficient. Current research does not show a clear difference in running economy between heel and forefoot strikers.[6] Running economy simply means how much energy your body uses to run at a certain speed.

So, Should You Change Your Foot Strike?

Not just because someone on social media told you to. There is no single "perfect" way to run. Your foot strike is influenced by your body, your speed, your shoes, your training, and many other factors.

If you are running well without pain, there may be no reason to change your foot strike. If you are dealing with an injury, changing your running form may sometimes help — but it should be based on your individual situation, not a blanket rule from social media.

THE BOTTOM LINE

"Heel striking is not inherently bad."

Instead of trying to make every runner use the same running form, look at the whole picture: your symptoms, your training, your strength, your goals, and how your body responds to running.

🍎 MOVEMENT SNACK OF THE MONTH

Marching

Want to work on your knee drive and upright posture? Try marching! It's a simple way to practice a movement pattern used during running — without equipment.

Try it: March in place • Drive one knee up at a time • Keep your chest tall • Keep your hips level • Move your arms naturally

Dose: 2–3 sets of 1 minute

Use it: Before or after a run • Before strength training • As a warm-up • As a quick movement break during the day

Want to Learn More?

Have a running question you'd like me to cover in a future edition of Fuel for Your Run? Feel free to reach out! nesbenshade@hartzpt.com.

Until next month, keep running!

References

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