

Ripon Runners Juniors

Mission statement of young athletes:

An enthusiastic section with a positive attitude to running, willing to have fun whilst developing all levels of ability through physical activities, all of which are assisted by EA coaches and assistants

Setting limits

England Athletics offer guidelines on the maximum distance that children should run in any one session. They recommend that weekly training mileage should not exceed three sessions per week for children age up to 14 years old, and teens aged 15-18 can train up to five times per week but no further than 5 miles per session. Guidelines may need adjusting depending upon the particular circumstances of the child.

EA advocate that while children are experiencing major physical changes during growth, it is good to limit the volume and intensity of their training – development changes may cause the child to temporarily perform less well which can lead to fatigue or injury.

Growth related injuries

As bones, cartilage and muscles continue to develop during puberty, teenagers are at risk of growth related injuries [EA, Sept 2019]. Female junior athletes are at particular risk of strain in the legs, hips and knees, because the way that they walk, run and move will change when their hips start to widen – this growth period can continue up until the age of 20yrs old.

Overuse during this major growth phase can be counterproductive - regular training sessions of more than 5 miles can lead to inflammation of the tendons which are developing between the bones and this can then lead on to premature calcification in susceptible areas [juniorathleticleague.co.uk]

Our coaches can work with juniors to strengthen core muscles to reduce these risks by building into the training sessions methods such as hill training, fartleks and fundamental movements such as skipping and jumping.

Getting the balance right

EA state the minimum age for a 10k is 15 years old. Those wishing to compete in the occasional 10k race is fine, providing that young person is not training to a 10k distance and effort on a regular basis. Again, it is advised that the best way is to keep the training distances short until the child is fully developed.

In summary

The importance for young athletes not to over train is paramount, not only can it promote injury, but it can take the enjoyment out of the sport. However, competitiveness is healthy for young athletes to set and attain their own personal goals. Being active in running is excellent for a child's all round development and something we wish to promote – following these guidelines will hopefully leave them wanting to achieve more, whilst maintaining their enthusiasm and ensure they avoid overtraining.

Transition to adult training sessions at Ripon Runners

Our club follows England Athletics Guidelines and once a child reaches the age of 16yrs, they are then able to leave the Junior section and train with the adults. Even then, it is advised that shorter training sessions of up to 5 miles, three times per week is sufficient and these should also have a varied element [such as fartleks] incorporated into the session.

Helen Cox

Ripon Runners Juniors, EA LIRF and Athletics Coach

September 2019