



## NHS: Couch to 5K

### Laura

Well, I hated sport at school and have avoided exercise at all costs ever since. But I realised it had been ten years since I had done anything and decided it was time that I should get fit. I didn't want to join a gym, I didn't want to be in an exercise class, I just wanted to do my own thing, so I decided that running would be a good way of getting started.

I knew I needed a bit of structure, a plan to follow, that's when I came across Couch to 5K. I'm going to get running now.

So the great thing about the Couch to 5K plan is that it understands the limitations of a new runner and builds you up very gradually, from running for just a minute alternated with a minute of walking. That's how week one starts. And then it builds you up slowly and gradually through the nine weeks until you can run for 30 minutes non-stop or 5K.

The great thing about the podcasts is that you have one for each week of the plan. You download them and listen to them on your MP3 player while you're running. They tell you when to run, when to walk, when it's time to stop. So it's like having a personal trainer, but without the cost or the hassle. So I'd better get back to running.

We all know that running is good for us. Personally, I love it because I feel really energised and awake when I've been for a run. I'm off to see Lisa Purcell from the British Heart Foundation who's going to tell me exactly why running is good for us.

Nice to meet you, Lisa. Tell me a bit about why running is good for my health.

### Lisa

Running like other activities can help prevent and manage a variety of health conditions. But it can also include things like better body shape and appearance, being able to sleep better and obviously manage your weight. It can help people feel less stressed and more relaxed and also help people feel that they can concentrate better.

### Laura

So why is Couch to 5K a good way of getting into running?

### Lisa

Because it's a gradual build-up, so people who aren't doing that much activity can start building up in terms of the intensity and the duration.

### Laura

So why is running so good for your heart?



## **Lisa**

Physical activity can halve your risk of developing coronary heart disease, regular activity slows down the narrowing of the arteries to the heart and the brain that occurs with age. And the more activity you do the stronger your heart becomes, so it can pump more blood with each beat. As long as people start slowly and build up gradually they should be fine.

## **Laura**

I think one of the biggest benefits that I've experienced as a result of finishing Couch to 5K has been mental as opposed to physical. I had been so frightened of exercise for so long, but I stuck to the plan and I managed to get to the point where I'm running 5K three times a week. And that feels like a real achievement. I was really embarrassed when I first started the running, but now I feel proud, I feel like a proper runner. And I think it's become a habit for life. I'm going to keep on running.

