

Benefits of Cycling for Runners

A runner that adds cycling to their workout may enjoy several benefits.

Exercising using several kinds of cardio in a training schedule is called cross training

Cross training is often used within the schedule to provide the athlete with an opportunity to exercise while still providing some relief to the muscles their main focus has been punishing. Another benefit is that stimulating more muscles, in different ways will boost overall fitness, calorie consumption and glycogen storage - all benefit most typical fitness goals when nutrition is adequately matched to the activity.

This means that instead of running 6 days a week, a runner may run 5 and cycle 1 day.

Cycling is a popular alternative as it is low impact. But there are plenty of others.

(For sportspeople such as footballers, boxers or climbers and other fitness goals, there are better cross training choices than cycling as cycling does little in the region of ankle need hip joint co-ordination and stability under power or movements that use rotational motions through these joints, spine or pectoral girdle.)

The heart and lungs benefit of course because they are challenged by another form of cardio (usually one that the body is less efficient at). Meanwhile different muscles work differently in each activity so there will also be some greater stimulation to your total muscle mass (resulting in higher calorie consumption and glycogen storage amongst other things).

Where cycling replaces the other form of exercise on that workout day then, the additional cycling day might be high or low intensity depending on your end goal and phase of work for that goal. Even at a moderate intensity the body can still enjoy relief from the stress of running to the muscles and joints.

Simply adding cycling as a means of transport to work, however, should come with a caution - the athlete is only increasing the load rather than relieving and altering the target muscles and joints of the exercise load. At a gentle pace, this is fine, the period of raised blood circulation and heart and lung activity, will most likely provide some added benefit to relieving a certain amount of stiffness and soreness as well as the extra workout gained however mild.

If cycling to work is to be added to a full week of hard running, then the pace and intensity of the cycling should be kept down and flexibility is a must. Nutrition is also important, if the athlete is following an intense regime then they must be careful to keep their muscle glycogen stores up - adding a cycle to work will deplete these more than a bus or car journey.