


# RUNNER'S



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August 2006

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# MIND + BODY

## How I... recovered from postural dysfunction

**Name:** Dean Mundy

**Age:** 38

**Years running:** 12

**The problem:** In 2002 Dean developed calf tears. Despite numerous physiotherapy sessions and layoffs from running, the problem persisted and Dean was told that his running days were over. After a chance meeting with a client, he consulted a Corrective Holistic Exercise Kinesiology (CHEK) practitioner who said that Dean's calf tears were due to 22 years of poor posture. The diagnosis was postural dysfunction resulting in an increased curve in the upper spine, and weakened and stretched spinal ligaments.



### Getting the right advice

"When I first had the calf strains I went to a number of specialists. I did everything by the book; regular physiotherapy sessions, exercises, stretches and a three-month layoff from running. But the problem persisted each time I tried to start running. In the end I was told I should take up swimming or cycling. A client saw me hobbling around at work and suggested I see a CHEK practitioner, who told me if I was prepared to work hard and follow a rigorous exercise and lifestyle rehab program that I would definitely run again."



PHOTOS: LISA VERRIER

### Slowly, slowly

"I needed to increase my lumbar lordosis (lower back curve) before even thinking about running again. So I began exercises for flexibility, stability and strengthening, starting with exercises designed to activate my deep abdominals. Then I progressed to exercises for training the different muscle groups to work together, as they would need to during a run. I did lateral ball rolls, lying on the Swiss Ball and rolling out to

one side while keeping my body aligned, and reverse woodchops, where you twist with a weighted cable machine."

### Change your ways

"Before I started rehab my sleeping patterns were shocking. I would go to bed around 2am and fall asleep on the couch or slouched over the laptop. The CHEK instructor told me that in order for my body to repair and strengthen, I had to get more quality sleep and in a bed, not the couch. It took a lot of self-discipline to get to bed earlier but I was really determined to run again. Now I have a regular 10.30pm bed time – most nights anyway."

### Running again

"After six months I was given the go ahead to start running. That first run was nerve-wracking. I eased into it slowly, very slowly. Within three weeks I was able to pick up the pace and was running without pain. Correcting my spinal alignment had also changed my running technique and I began running technically well; taller, straighter and stronger than I ever had."

### Do as you're told

"I had been increasing my mileage, a little too quickly, and during a session my heart-rate stayed elevated for longer than it should have. I was cautioned to ease back and get plenty of rest. The next day I was feeling okay so decided to go for a run anyway. Three days later I could barely walk. The increase in mileage had resulted in severe ligament and tendon trauma in my foot."

### Set a goal

"It wasn't until I was actually able to run again that I set myself a goal. I started with small goals like doing my usual 5km run without stopping. Then I focused on lowering my times, each month setting a new goal time. Sticking to this small but steady approach, I upped the mileage gradually and now here I am, training for my first marathon."

*Tell us how you achieved a running breakthrough by writing to [editorial@ausrun.com.au](mailto:editorial@ausrun.com.au), or Runner's World, 3 B Lynch St, Hawthorn, Vic 3122.*



## CHEK it out

CORRECTIVE HOLISTIC EXERCISE KINESIOLOGY is a corrective exercise and high-performance conditioning program which looks not only at your specific injury and the biomechanics of your running, but things like posture, nutrition and lifestyle. It's like an overall conditioning program with a CHEK practitioner as your health and lifestyle coach.

Raylene Callaway, CHEK practitioner and owner of Gratitude, a personal health coaching centre in Tasmania, explains: "When a client presents with an injury we look at the body as a whole. For example when the spine is in good alignment; it means the body is not fighting gravity, and can work efficiently. With Dean we needed to increase his lower back curve to facilitate rotation of the spinal column during walking and running. In doing so, the lower back will then drive the rest of the spine, resulting in an efficient gait.

"When the mechanics of the spine are efficient, the spinal ligaments can stretch and store and release energy to swing through to move in the other direction. When the spinal segments are aligned correctly, they can also better dissipate the load which goes through the spine, which is considerable if training for a marathon, and decrease the risk of injury and pain. This is why people will find they are running much more efficiently than before."

American Paul Chek, an ex-army aviator and boxer, originally trained in massage therapy and sports injury care, orthopaedic and holistic health. He believed in recognising the signs and symptoms of disorders that may impede successful rehabilitation, and then working with appropriate professionals to achieve the desired outcome. So in CHEK treatment, you may be referred to other health specialists for specific treatment, such as a dietitian or chiropractor, as part of your rehabilitation program.

Chek was also instrumental in taking the Swiss Ball out of traditional rehabilitation and bringing it

into the fitness industry. He developed free weight and light weight exercises, many of which personal trainers and gyms quickly took on board. Steering clear of heavy weight machinery which is mainly designed to work only one major muscle group at a time, Chek developed exercises using Swiss and medicine balls, cable machines, dumbbells and barbells. This consolidated his practice of working muscle groups rather than isolated muscles.

Overall this program is primarily about movement patterns, such as push/pull, lunge, squat, bend and twist. Running and walking action involves all these patterns and so it is important for running performance that these movements are all working optimally. Chas Barclay of Human Engineering, a CHEK rehabilitation and sports specific training centre in Sydney, explains: "Take the start of a race. You start with a slight bend and then extend as you move into a walk or run gait. If any of these movement patterns are weak, your performance decreases, you tire quickly and you risk injury. Through exercises we can strengthen and build power and endurance in these patterns and work towards running with a perfectly balanced gait. This then increases running performance while greatly reducing your risk of injury."

A consultation can cost from A\$60 to A\$120 an hour, something to consider when your initial consultation will take between two to four hours.

CHEK awareness is steadily growing with New Zealand. Barclay suggests this may have to do with success of the Les Mills programs, a free-style fitness exercise method, originating in the late 90s, that went on to become a phenomenal success in gyms around the world today. "Les Mills had a large number of proactive trainers

who took the CHEK methods on board."

Most practitioners are already qualified in an area of health or fitness such as personal training, sports therapy, orthopaedics or nutrition. The appeal of CHEK methods is due to its holistic approach which is seen as having a much more beneficial end result.



BACK TO RUNNING: DEAN MUNDY WORKS WITH HIS CHEK INSTRUCTOR.

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[www.humanengineering.com.au](http://www.humanengineering.com.au)

To find a practitioner see:

[www.chekinstitute.com](http://www.chekinstitute.com)