



Ask the Expert with Dr. Darrell Menard

Find Answers to your Sport Medicine Questions!

In-line Skating versus Running?

Q: *I have been running regularly for over 20 years and I now find that if I run more than 2 days in a row my hips get sore. I am considering in-line skating several days/wk to see if this reduces the impact on my body. My problem is that in-line skating looks almost effortless and I am concerned that while it may be better for my ageing joints, it will offer me very little in terms of fitness benefits. How do running and in-line skating compare in terms of fitness benefits? -Jonathon*

A: Dear Jonathon – Congratulations on leading by example in terms of your long term commitment to living an active lifestyle. Whether you are trying to reduce the impact load on your body or just looking to change up your training routine, research shows in-line skating has a lot to offer in terms of fitness benefits. Let's compare in-line skating and running using 5 criteria:

- Calories burned – studies show rollerblading at a steady pace will burn approximately 528 calories/hr while running at a comfortable pace burns approximately 720 calories/hr. Skating faster, skating uphill and doing intervals can increase your calorie burning to over 900 calories/hr. Not too shabby!
- Aerobic fitness – running provides greater aerobic fitness gains than in-line skating. This is because you can coast on in-line skates but you can't coast while running. However, in-line skating has been shown to be better for aerobic fitness development than cycling.
- Muscle building – the body motion required to in-line skate provides a more complete muscle building workout than running and if you swing your arms vigorously the benefits are even greater. In-line skating truly can provide a great lower body, core and upper body workout.
- Impact – in-line skating subjects your body to 50% less impact forces than running. This is a significant benefit especially for people who are aging and have some wear and tear on their knees, hips and backs.
- Core strengthening – in-line skating requires more balance and coordination than running and this will help strengthen your core musculature.

The bottom line is that in-line skating is an excellent lower impact exercise alternative. Regardless of how skilled you are, please remember to wear a helmet when you do this sport and consider wearing other protective equipment such as knee and elbow pads and wrist guards. Have fun cruising on the trails.

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Dr. Darrell Menard is the Surgeon General's specialist advisor in sport medicine. He has worked extensively with athletes from multiple sports and has covered Canadian teams competing at multiple games including the 2012 Olympics and the 2016 Paralympic games. These articles were originally published in the Canadian Forces Journal, the Maple Leaf.

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