

Jacobs Ladder – Friend or Foe?

Jacob's ladder is one of Perth's most spectacular sights. With views across the city and the Swan River it should be on all tourists to do list. It is also a very popular place to exercise whilst enjoying the scenery. Each day hundreds of locals sweat it out up and down the 350 plus stairs.



People of all ages and fitness levels have become addicted to stair climbing and its benefits, and it is even being discussed as being added as a new sport in coming Olympic games. So the big question this month is 'is stair running for me'. What are the positive and negatives of stair climbing?

Benefits

There are many benefits of stair climbing these include;

1. **Calorie Burn** – latest research shows that climbing stairs may be the most effective way to burn up calories. Climbing stairs burns up 250% more calories than swimming for the same amount of time, 150% more than tennis, 150% more than bowling, 63% more than cycling, and 23% more than running
2. **General Fitness** - Stair climbing enhances your cardiovascular fitness and strengthens your heart. It has also been found that regular stair climbing reduces the risk of heart disease.
3. **Convenience** - Stair climbing requires significant energy and burns plenty of calories in a short period of time. Because of this, you can achieve the benefits of a longer, more moderate workout in a shorter amount of time. Stair climbing requires no special equipment and is therefore cost effective.
4. **Developing Strength:** During stair climbing, you must use your leg muscles to haul yourself up--particularly your quadriceps, calf and gluteal muscles. Your arms also get a workout from pumping while your run up the stairs or



when you use the banister to pull yourself up. Stair climbing can tone up your legs, buttocks and abs.

5. **Cross Training:** Because stair climbing challenges your aerobic and anaerobic systems, it can help runners, swimmer, cyclists and other competitive athletes improve their endurance and sprint performance. Cross training with stair climbing helps combat boredom by varying your routine.



Negatives

Stair climbing isn't for everyone and certain things should be considered before embarking on Jacobs:

1. **If you suffer from knee pain** – Due to the mechanics of the knee, most people with knee pain will find it increases when walking up and down stairs. This is due to the increased force through the joints when climbing and descending stairs
2. **If you suffer from hip pain** – As stated above when stair climbing there is an increase in pressure through the joints including the hip. This could lead to a flare up in the hip pain and should be avoided when possible.
3. **If you are suffering from back pain or injuries** – Stair climbing is a grueling sport. It places enormous amounts of stress through the body. When you begin to tire (which WILL happen at Jacobs), individuals tend to lean far forwards as



they climb up the stairs. This altered posture puts huge strain on the back and can irritate current low back injuries and even initiate low back pain.

4. **If you suffer from any heart conditions** – Before beginning such a strenuous activity discuss it with your physician
5. **If you haven't exercised for a substantial period of time** – Start with a gentle walk and eventually build up to stair climbing!

Tips for Stair Climbing

So if the benefits outweigh the negatives, read the following tips which will help you to prepare yourself for a safe workout.

1. Have a solid warm up before you start – including a walk/jog and stretches
2. Start slow – Do Jacobs 1-3 times in your first few sessions, doing one step at a time.
3. While climbing, you should lean forward slightly from the hips with the back straight. At no time, should you be rounded in the lower back area.
4. Place your whole foot on the step. Avoid climbing with your heels hanging off the edge as you can injure your Achilles
5. Mix it up – don't do Jacob's everyday. Include other activities like running, cycling, circuit and swimming in your routine to minimise overuse injuries
6. Drink water – adequate hydration is essential during any exercise
7. Do it with a friend. It will keep you motivated and safe (especially if you are doing in the evening)
8. Always wear good supportive running shoes
9. Do a warm down that includes walking as well as a stretch of the hamstrings, calf, quadriceps and gluteal
10. If you experience any pain, stop. If pain does not subside contact Bodysmart for a Physiotherapy consultation to thoroughly assess any aches or pains. Appointments can be booked by contacting 9481 8708

