



# MLS Laser Therapy for Runners

**POSTED ON APR 1, 2016 | 0 COMMENTS**

Think about a nagging running injury you've had for a while. If you've been running for any length of time, this won't be hard to do. As runners, we often have little aches and pains we love to talk about. They can cause us all manner of aggravation, and sometimes it's just part of being a runner.

Since the summer of 2014, I've had an issue with my left Achilles tendon. It was sort of a dull ache, occasionally flaring up to something more painful. The pain would come and go, but was sort of always there.

I saw a physical therapist who prescribed a series of strengthening activities. I went to a sports massage therapist who would work on various tightness issues in other parts of the body. I've also been going to an acupuncturist several times. I rested, iced, got more active on my foam roller.... Everything seems to be helping a little, yet the problem persists.

For me, it's hard to determine when aches and pains are something to be worried about, or just the normal soreness that comes from running and marathon training. While I was confident I wasn't in immediate danger of hurting something long-term, I obviously wanted to get rid of this pain.

I recently had the opportunity to try out a new treatment option involving lasers. Yes, lasers. If this sounds like something out of sci-fi movies, it's actually been around for about 35 years.

If you've been suffering with a nagging injury like this for a while, or have unexpected soreness before a key race, you may want to consider going in for a round of MLS laser therapy.

## What is MLS Laser Therapy?

When I first heard about this, I was extremely skeptical. I was mostly worried it was going to hurt—you know, laser guns and lightsabers? That's not what this kind of laser is.

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These lasers couple a pulse laser with a fixed laser (Multi-Lock System, MLS). It uses wavelengths of light with strong anti-inflammatory effects on tissue. I don't really know what that means, but Emily Celner, who conducted my treatment at the [Advanced Pain Management Center in Beaverton](#), told me the cells of my damaged tissues would absorb light energy from the laser. It has been shown to increase the metabolism of cells, which speeds up the healing process. The result would be decreased inflammation and pain.

Our bodies are constantly in a state of being broken down and rebuilt. As runners, we put a whole lot more strain and stress on them than most people. We ask our bodies to recover from more self-induced trauma, and to do it faster and more frequently. MLS laser therapy has been proven to speed up the process of recovery by repairing at the cellular level. This is not just for running injuries either. They can treat pretty much anything.

It's also super quick. Each treatment (I did six total) took about 10 minutes, and I was in and out in less than 20 minutes. It is completely painless, and there are no known side effects.

## Costs and Treatment Options

Emily shared that treatment can be tailored for each person, depending on their specific problems and goals. There is also a bit of an art to the application.

After my third treatment, I felt pain I didn't have before. It subsided after a few days.

When I went back for my fourth round, Emily said that experience is fairly common, and actually an important development in the treatment process.

On each visit up to then she had increased the power of the laser, until finding that "pain" threshold. Once that threshold was established, she could reduce the power of the laser just a notch to make the treatment most effective.

The cost of this treatment isn't exactly cheap, but consistent with similar treatment options not covered by insurance. Currently, for the initial round, it's \$720 for a 12-pack of sessions, or \$480 for six. Supportive treatment is cheaper: \$480 for 12 and \$300 for six.

It's funny how many runners I know won't think twice about dropping \$100 on a race entry, but won't invest in their own health. I'm not suggesting this particular treatment is the only option, but as you think about what it will take to achieve your running goals, it's OK to take care of yourself by investing in something like this.

## Results. Did it Help?

This is the big question. If you're going to spend money on anything, you want to know if it's going to work. Does it relieve symptoms and allow you to go back to running pain

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## Current Running Conditions



PORTLAND  
**40°**

Cloudy

High: 72° Low: 43°

Wind: NNE 4 mph

Humidity: 89%

Sunrise: 6:40 am

Sunset: 7:47 pm

free?

Yes, but....

After my first session, I was shocked by how much better I felt. It was almost as if my pain was totally gone! During the two weeks of treatment, I vacillated between thinking MLS laser therapy was a miracle, to wondering if it was doing anything at all. I always felt better after a treatment, but usually, after a long run or hard workout, I would be back near—but just below—a similar pain level as before. If I was at a pain level of 7 before treatment, I am now at a 5 or 6.

The bottom line is that there's isn't a quick fix or easy answer when it comes to injuries. Often it just takes time and a whole quiver of recovery tools to help you overcome whatever it is that's bugging you. MLS laser therapy can (and perhaps should) be one of those tools.

If you have a big event coming up, and find yourself with a new injury— one that you're worried will impair your performance—MLS laser therapy could be exactly what you need.

This could be a great option for someone who has tried a few other things with little success, but who wants to avoid treatments that require extended recovery time.

For more information visit [apmconline.org](http://apmconline.org).



Nathan Freeburg is a Portland father of one, soon to be a father of three! He runs with the PRC Race Team.



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