

Murray & Roberts | Warning Signs

We've all been faced with a new illness this year with the COVID-19 pandemic, which we still (globally) don't understand. Therefore, we thought it good to ask someone from within our Murray & Roberts Running Club, who is both a healthcare professional and a classy runner, what we as runners should look out for, and can do, in the face of the pandemic. **Irene Goncalves** is a physiotherapist, sub-8:00 Comrades runner, 3:10 marathoner, and a mother of three boys, and she was assisting COVID-19 patients when she too contracted the virus. Her husband David, a counselling psychologist and a fine runner in his own right, also got it, just before her, as Irene recounts.



David's COVID experience was very different to mine. In fact, he was confirmed positive twice, in March and in July, and both times he had very mild symptoms... slight sinus, mild headache, and loss of smell the second time. Fortunately, both times he managed to only miss a day or two of training, and then he was back to exercising without any hassle. My symptoms were very different.

The only symptom that I felt two days before the fever started, was just blocked sinuses. I still did a tough interval session the day before my fever started, and I felt good during that run. But then I had fever for three weeks. It was under control during my hospital stay, but came back when I was discharged and back home. I had headaches, fatigue, freezing cold feet, a sinus infection, and breathlessness with just the mildest activity, like walking to my room. I had a slight cough, disorientation and a heavy chest – it was as if an elephant had sat on me! It was not pleasant.

Fear Versus Courage

As a Healthcare worker, it is very scary to be on the other side. Initially I thought I would get over it easily, as I am fit and healthy. However, as the days went on, I realised that my body wasn't putting up the fight that I had expected it would. That's when the fear sets in, as you realise you need more medical intervention. I guess working in the hospital, we see the worst-case scenarios all the time.

As runners, we tend to think we are bulletproof, but I think runners need to realise that they are not immune just because they are fit and healthy. I do believe, though, that our fitness and healthy eating habits can only be a positive. Runners also tend to push through injury and illness – trust me, I have done so before many a time – but with COVID one cannot do this.

Getting back to running and exercise will probably be the biggest challenge that a runner will face after contracting the disease. For most, it will possibly be seamless, but I urge runners to watch their heart rates once they go back to running, and to listen to your body. I started walking on the indoor trainer four weeks after the initial diagnosis, then I gradually started a walk/jog regime This was very frustrating, as my heart rate was sky-high at times.

I initially struggled with chest pains after exercise, which led me to consult a sports physician, to do all the necessary tests to make sure my heart and lungs were not

under too much strain. One has to understand that there is a massive vascular impact and this needs to be monitored by a physician or GP. Checking clotting factors, as well as heart and lung function, are very important before returning to rigorous exercise.

Know the Signs



So, what does one look for? The early signs of infection for me would be headache and sinus symptoms, although it can differ so much from one person to the next. For runners, I would say monitor your heart rate and look out for signs of fatigue.

Now that I've beaten this virus, I have some big goals. On the horizon is that elusive sub-three-hour marathon. This has been a goal in the last year, and one that I am looking forward to achieving. /K

You can find more info on the Murray & Roberts Running Club via our [Facebook](#) page

Images: Courtesy Irene Goncalves & Murray & Roberts Running Club



Rest in Peace, Mark



On another, rather sad note, we at Murray & Roberts Running Club pay homage to one of our finest members, **Mark Humphries**, who unexpectedly passed away from heart failure. Mark's smiling face, toughness and endearing attitude will be missed around the black and yellow gazebo at race finishes. Rest in peace Mark, until we run together again.