

# I'M A RUNNER

## LEROY CHIAO

NASA Astronaut, 44, Houston



INTERVIEW BY  
JOANNA SAYAGO

**I watched** the first Apollo moon landing as an eight-year-old kid [in 1969]. That's what inspired me to be an astronaut. Lots of kids say they want to be one, but I never forgot the dream.

Being fit is important to being an astronaut. If we didn't work out in space, our muscles and heart would have a hard time readjust-

I typically run three or four days a week, between two and four miles. But I'm short-legged, so I'm not that fast.

I've been at NASA for 15 years and flown three shuttle missions. We always had workout equipment but never a treadmill. But on my most recent mission, I was on the International Space Station for 193 days [from last October to April], and the treadmill was an integral part of our

In space we conduct experiments that are sensitive to vibrations. So NASA built us a special treadmill that uses fly wheels, gyroscopes, and springs that damp out pounding.

Because there's no gravity, I needed to be strapped down with a harness that goes over my shoulders and attaches to the treadmill with bungee cords. The cords pull the harness down on my shoulders. It's like running

down stairs that weigh as much as you do. It gets *heavy*.

The fastest you can run on the treadmill is a 10-minute-per-mile pace—but the added weight on your shoulders tires you out.

The harness gave me hot spots, and I had to use duct tape to protect my skin, which didn't work very well—I have a couple scars from it.

In space sweat beads up on your face instead of running down it.

A regular shower doesn't work very well in space, so we use wet towels and rinseless body baths and shampoos. They keep you clean, but they're nowhere near as satisfying as a hot shower.

The Russians hooked up a little tape deck. I always listened to Alsu, a popular Russian musician. She has a soothing voice that's very pleasant to run to.

Dehydrated mashed potatoes with onions—they're really tasty and a great source of carbs.

I grew up in the Bay Area and used to run races for fun. One of my favorites was the "Run to the Far Side" in Golden Gate Park. Gary Larson would run every year wearing number "00."

Of all the exercises I do, running hurts the most—so it must be doing me the most good. I plan to keep running until I'm way past the point where I have any business doing it. **RW**



To read the full interview, see [runnersworld.com/amarunner](http://runnersworld.com/amarunner)

ing to gravity on Earth.

exercise regimen.

with dumbbells on your shoul-

