



WHEN RUNNING GIVES YOU THE S__TS!

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One of the most common problems I hear of, particularly with novice, keen runners and triathletes who eat relatively well and have high fibre diets is that they get all sorts of gut problems when it comes to running. I queried my wife (a dietitian) on this recently and what follows are some handy tips to keep you out of the loo and on the track when hammering those kilometres.

Runner's diarrhoea (aka the trots, pit stops) and other gastrointestinal upsets such as cramping and stitches can be unfortunate and frustrating side effects of vigorous exercise. Reduced blood flow to the gut, dehydration, nerves, being female or vegetarian, injury during exercise, wrong food choices, undiluted gels/concentrated sports drinks or soft drinks or the timing of foods may all be contributing factors.

Reducing fibre and caffeine intake closer to exercise and choosing liquid meals will all help to reduce the severity of stomach or gastric distress. Making sure solid meals are consumed earlier (2-4 hours prior to exercise) or even switching to a liquid meal supplement instead and only using fluids closer to the commencement of exercise is often sufficient to minimize such problems. Running tends to be the triathlon discipline most susceptible to this ailment because of the increases in gastric motility (jiggling) associated with running in comparison to swimming and cycling where the gut is relatively stable.

Dietary factors that usually cause concern for athletes are legumes such as baked beans, high fibre cereals such as bran or wholegrain breads, gastric stimulants such as caffeine and spicy foods, large amounts of fresh or dried fruits and vegetables (especially with skin on), high doses of vitamin C and finally foods that are too high in fat or protein as these will slow gastric transit time and thus sit in your gut for longer periods before digestion can be completed. Remember tolerance to foods is always an individual matter so just be sure to find out what works best for you and then practise repeatedly in training. In fact you can train your body to better tolerate certain foods and concentrations of sports drinks and the like over time, but make sure you mirror race conditions as much as possible.

Below I have included a list of lower fibre pre-exercise eating ideas for you to try. Of course the duration of the session or event and also your bodyweight will determine how much you should be consuming and how long before the training session (e.g. Racing versus a 2 hour slow training run), however the basic principals remain the same. Give it a try and hopefully you'll get through your next run with the "runs"!

Low fat low fibre pre-exercise meals and snacks

- Low fat creamy rice e.g. LE Rice/Heinz 98% fat free creamed rice
- Plain pasta and low fat commercial tomato pasta sauce
- White toast or fruit bread with jam, marmalade or honey(no butter or marg)
- Fruit juice and low fat low fibre cereal bar
- Low fibre cereal such as rice bubbles, cornflakes, cheerios with low fat milk
- Liquid meal supplement e.g. Sustagen sport or Endura Optimiser
- Sports drink e.g. Gatorade (made to recommended concentration)
- Ripe banana or canned pears/peaches in natural juice with low fat custard
- No fat flavoured yoghurt and stewed apples/pears
- Plain scone with jam (no butter or marg or cream)
- English muffin with vegemite(no butter or marg)
- Canned spaghetti in tomato sauce with white toast(no butter or marg)
- Jelly with tinned pears
- Low fat pancakes with little maple syrup or honey (no butter or marg)
- Low fat low fibre packet or homemade muffin
- Low fat banana/mango smoothie (see recipe below)

Breakfast in a glass

- 1 cup low fat milk or low fat soy milk
- 1 large banana
- 1 tbs honey
- ½ cup no fat flavoured yoghurt
- Sprinkle cinnamon (option)

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth and combined.

Energy: 1813kJ

Protein: 21.7g

Carb: 81g

Fat: 3.19g

Fibre:2.6g