

Eating before the big race

A common question runners ask is: What can I eat before I race. There is really no answer to this that will work for everyone. It depends greatly upon individual differences in past eating habits and how your body reacts to and processes foods.

However, there are some guidelines that will keep you from running into major GI problems during your race.

- Eat only foods that your body is familiar with. If you have been eating a banana and milk before your races or training runs, do not switch to a burrito with the works. Anything that your body is not used to can cause problems.
- The majority of your food intake before the race should be composed of complex carbohydrates. 65 to 75 percent carbohydrates is a good target to shoot for. You want your blood glucose levels to stay up during the race. Complex carbs that are fairly low on the glycemic index will help do this. If you eat mostly simple sugars such as candy or sweets, your blood glucose levels will spike and then drop rapidly, leaving you with low glucose levels at the start of the race. So avoid foods that are too sweet.
- Avoid high protein meals. Protein takes longer to digest and may remain in your stomach longer. This can cause cramping or other GI problems during the race.
- Avoid foods that are high in fat. Fatty foods also remain in your stomach longer and can cause problems during the race.
- Avoid high fiber foods. Fiber can cause GI problems such as diarrhea and nausea.

If you have an important race coming up, experiment with pre-workout foods during your training runs. Find out what combination of foods give you the most energy and avoid gastrointestinal distress.

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