



RUNTEX UNIVERSITY

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT

As I think back through all the workouts and races I have run, the one thing that has ruined a potentially great run was what I ate before the run. This is not about nutrition, but about when to eat and drink. As you get more experienced in running and walking you will start becoming your own expert on what works for you. I cannot go to tell you what to eat, just when to eat. Every once in a while I still give in to those last minute hunger pains and eat something too close to a workout and always regret it. You want to run on an empty stomach because your body can only use what is already digested and stored in your muscles, liver and blood.

Any food in your stomach is only going to compete for blood for digestion and leave you feeling horrible. When you are digesting food your blood supply is in great demand. If you are digesting food when it is time to exercise, the competition for blood is between the internal organs and your muscles. If you exercise on a full stomach, your digestive process will suffer and your performance will suffer. The worst part of it is how uncomfortable you feel. You will be dead legged, light headed, with a side ache and sick to your stomach. Does this sound like a good way to train? To avoid this, I recommend not eating within 3 hours of exercise.

By the time you start feeling hungry, it will be time to run and the hunger pains will go away when you are running. It is okay to drink within an hour of your run and the drinking can help keep the hunger pains away. You will find that certain foods are best eaten after a workout, not before. Heavy and rich foods are hard to digest and are better eaten after the run. It is important to eat simple foods prior to running, like fruits, breads, and cereals. Eat your big meals after you run or walk as a reward. If you workout in the morning, Have a good meal the night before. If you run at lunch, eat a simple breakfast and avoid meat and greasy foods. If you run in the evening, eat a good breakfast and a light lunch.

Drinking has some of the same rules. Your goal should be to stay hydrated all day long. Drink all day long so when you go run you don't have to tank up. You can get a bad side stitch from having fluids sloshing around in your stomach and they won't absorb in time to help on a run under an hour. When you are done with your run, start drinking right away. This is the best time to hydrate.

Most 5K/10K are in the morning, so it is important to run in the mornings when you can. This will give you a chance to determine what foods you prefer the night before. Eat a big meal at night so you can limit what you eat in the morning before you run. Most people like a little something in their stomach in the morning, but avoid over eating. If you feel you need to eat in the morning before you run, get up early. People have different tolerances to an empty stomach so you need to experiment with this for yourself. Afterwards eat whatever you want.

