



ASK A NUTRITIONIST

with Tara Postnikoff

Q: Could eating certain foods cause bloating and affect my training?

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A:

No runner wants to feel bloated. It's normal to have this feeling occasionally, but regular bloating, gas or flatulence is not a healthy pattern. Consuming too much sugar, wheat, or dairy, or choosing greasy, nutrient-poor foods can result in bloating or gas, which may signal a sluggish digestive system or a potential food intolerance. Neither will result in optimal training, since you can't perform well if you don't feel well.

To rule out a potential food intolerance, try removing the suspected food offender from your diet for three weeks. If the bloating subsides, it is a sign that you should continue to avoid or minimize the consumption of that food. If the bloating does not subside,

try removing a different food and repeat the process. Another alternative is an elimination diet, where you remove all potential offenders for three weeks and slowly re-introduce them into the diet every four to five days. If bloating returns, remove the last item that was added and wait for the symptoms to disappear before testing the next item. It's worthwhile to consult a nutritionist or naturopath prior to starting an elimination diet so you don't miss out on key nutrients.

If you're looking to improve your digestive health, see if you can implement any of the tips below to help reduce bloating and other digestive difficulties.

8 TIPS FOR BETTER DIGESTION

1. Avoid drinking large volumes of water or other liquids with meals. Too much liquid will dilute your digestive juices, thereby slowing down the digestive process.

2. Consume one tablespoon of lemon juice or apple cider vinegar with one ounce of water 15 to 20 minutes before eating. This will increase the acidity in the stomach and help trigger the release of additional digestive enzymes.

3. Eat when you are relaxed, not when you are angry, emotional,

or in a hurry. Make sure you chew your food thoroughly, as this increases the release of digestive enzymes.

4. Stop eating when you are no longer hungry versus when you are full. Overeating can cause a feeling of bloating after consuming oversized portions.

5. Try adding herbs to your meals such as fennel, thyme or mint to reduce gas in your gut. Ginger can also help calm your stomach.

6. Avoid sweets such as dessert or fruit after a heavy meal. These foods

digest more quickly than heavier foods like meats and cheese, and can lead to digestive difficulties such as bloating if they are consumed at the wrong time.

7. Digestive enzyme supplements or digestive bitters can be considered to help reduce bloating, but consult a nutritionist or naturopath first so you get the right supplement for your condition.

8. Add a high-quality probiotic supplement to your diet. Too much sugar and processed food increases the amount of bad bacteria in your gut, which can

result in bloating and other health concerns such as a weakened immune system. Adding a broad-spectrum, high-quality probiotic supplement will help re-inoculate the gut with good bacteria to improve digestion, absorption of nutrients and the overall health of your digestive tract.

While being bloated ultimately might not hurt your run, it could signify that there is something going on that might eventually affect your running performance and overall health. If you have concerns, be sure to consult your health care practitioner. **RR**