



# ASK A NUTRITIONIST

by Tara Postnikoff

**Q:** I find it difficult to “eat and run” at the start of the day.

**How can I have a healthy breakfast and get my morning run in before work?**



**A:** The dilemma about eating breakfast before a morning run is one that many runners struggle with. After all, you are already up early to run and you don't necessarily want to wake up even earlier to eat. The answer is: it depends! You need to consider the purpose of the workout. Is it an easy or recovery run, or is it an intense workout that requires you to be sharp?

The number-one rule is to hydrate. At the very least, make sure you have about 500 mL of water 30 to 60 minutes before running. Water is key to reducing the risk of injuries because it keeps your muscles and joints well-lubricated and helps your body perform better.

Let's assume your morning routine doesn't allow an extra hour for you to digest any food. If your run is supposed to be easy and will last less than an hour, then water should usually be enough to get you through this workout. Make sure you prioritize your recovery breakfast to include protein and

carbs, and try to consume it within 60 to 90 minutes of finishing your workout.

If your run is a harder effort like hills or speed work and will last less than 90 minutes, it would be ideal to eat or drink something rich in easy-to-digest carbs at least 60 minutes prior to your run. Liquids digest more quickly than solids, so a small protein and fruit smoothie would be ideal. If you don't have time to eat beforehand, try fuelling during the workout with a carbohydrate beverage or other sports product. This will help ensure you have the energy and the mental sharpness to get through the workout.

For long runs of 90 minutes or more, you need to eat breakfast prior to your run in order to enhance performance, reduce muscle breakdown, improve recovery and decrease risk of injury. This meal should be consumed two to three hours prior to the run to allow for proper digestion. If you don't give yourself enough time for digestion, your run will be compromised because you won't access that potential energy and the food may cause gastric distress as it bounces around in your stomach. Try a carbohydrate-rich breakfast with a little protein, such as a bowl of oats and two eggs; a smoothie with fruit and protein powder; or Greek yogurt. Avoid high-fat and high-fibre options prior to running, for digestive reasons.

Remember, you can train your body to accept and digest food, just as you can train your body to run the right pace and distance. It is a matter of practice

and takes some time and consistency. Every runner is different and sometimes some trial and error needs to occur before you find the right combination. It is important to find something that works for you, so you can follow the same plan when it comes to race day. **RR**

---

*Tara Postnikoff is a Registered Nutritional Consultant, certified Personal Trainer and Triathlon/Running Coach in Toronto and is the founder of Healthy Eating Active Living™. Tara is an avid distance runner and triathlete, and a regular guest speaker for the Running Room training programs. Tara can be reached at [tara@heal-nutrition.com](mailto:tara@heal-nutrition.com) or [www.heal-nutrition.com](http://www.heal-nutrition.com).*

