

# Eating Before Running

By [Christine Luff](#), About.com Guide

<http://running.about.com/od/nutritionandhydration/f/preruneating.htm>

**Question:** Should I Eat Before a Run?

Is it necessary to eat before running?

**Answer:** When you begin a run, you should feel neither starved nor stuffed. You don't want to eat immediately before running because it may lead to cramping. Running on an empty stomach may cause you to run out of energy. Your best bet is to eat a light snack or meal about 1 1/2 to 2 hours before you start running.

Choose something high in carbohydrates and lower in fat, fiber, and protein. Some examples of good pre-workout fuel include:

- a banana and an energy bar
- a bowl of cold cereal with a cup of milk.
- a bagel with peanut butter

Stay away from rich, very fatty, or high-fiber foods, as they may cause [gastrointestinal distress](#).

If you have had issues with [gastrointestinal distress](#) during or after your runs, the foods you're eating in the 24 hours before your runs may be the culprit. Here's a guide to what you should and shouldn't eat before your runs.

## FOODS TO AVOID

Try limiting or eliminating some of these foods before running to see if it makes a difference:

**High-fiber foods:** Whole-grain foods, vegetables, legumes, and fruits that are high in fiber can cause [gastrointestinal distress or diarrhea](#).

**High-fat foods:** Foods with a lot of fat -- such as fried foods, cheese, hamburgers, or bacon -- digest slowly and will feel like they're sitting in your stomach.

**Caffeine:** Coffee or other caffeinated beverages can cause stomach issues or diarrhea.

## SAFE FOODS

These are the best types of pre-run foods to help avoid gastrointestinal distress during or after

running:

**Refined Carbs:** Processed white foods, like regular pasta, white rice, and plain bagels are good choices. Although they're not as nutritious as whole grain and unprocessed foods, they're easier on your stomach because the whole grain is already broken down.

**Low-Fiber Fruits and Veggies:** If you really want to eat fruits or vegetables before runs, zucchini, tomatoes, olives, grapes, and grapefruit are all low in fiber.

**Safe Dairy:** Some people have issues when they consume [dairy products before runs](#). Soy, rice, and almond milks generally don't contain the sugar lactose, which can be tough to digest. You can also try acidophilus milk and yogurts with live cultures, which contain bacteria that help with digest