



Runners and Triathletes

# Gut Issues Cheat Sheet

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## The Side Stitch

### WHAT

A sharp pain just below the ribs during exercise.

### WHY

Fatigue of surrounding muscles, poor blood supply to the diaphragm.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Warm up properly before running.
- Practice belly breathing and maintain an upright posture.
- Avoid heavy meals 2 hours prior to your run.
- Stay hydrated, but avoid excessive drinking immediately before.
- Gradually increase training intensity.
- Strengthen core muscles.

## Reflux

### WHY

Esophageal sphincter allowing stomach acid to flow back.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Avoid eating right before swimming or biking.
- Limit alcohol, coffee, oily food and spicy foods.

## Runner's Trots

### WHAT

Lower abdominal cramps, urgency, and diarrhea that occur during long runs and races.

### WHY

Often caused by taking gels while dehydrated, during long runs. Sometimes anxiety or IBS can cause urgency, too.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Drink at least 600ml water per hour during long runs and choose isotonic gels to avoid digestive issues.
- If you have IBS, try the low FODMAP Diet.
- If you have an anxious gut, practice familiar pre-race foods like oatmeal.
- Adapt your stomach to handle food and fluids during runs by practicing during training sessions.

## Nausea

### WHY

Dehydration leading to serious fluid loss and poor blood circulation.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Stay hydrated with 600-1000ml of fluids plus electrolytes per hour.
- Include 500mg of sodium per liter of fluid.

## The Sloshing Stomach

### WHY

Dehydration reducing stomach's ability to process fluids.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Hydrate early and regularly, aiming for 600ml to 1.5 liters per hour of exercise.

## Gas and Bloating

### WHY

Redirected blood flow from gut during exercise + specific foods.

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Avoid high-fat and high-fiber meals before running.
- Choose easy-to-digest carbs 1-2 hours before exercise.
- Limit gas-producing foods and lactose.

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I'm Cristina Sutter,  
M.H.Sc. RD*

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