

# Beware of carb loading

THE BEST FAST-FOOD PICKS, BEATING LATE-NIGHT CRAVINGS AND WHY YOU MAY GAIN WEIGHT WHILE TRAINING FOR A MARATHON.

BY LEAH McLAUGHLIN

**Q** “I thought I would lose weight by training for a marathon, but I’m actually putting on pounds! Help!”

**A** Don’t panic. This phenomenon has confounded many readers (and FITNESS staff members!) and is easily rectified. “You could be accumulating muscle, which is denser than fat, or you may be retaining water,” says Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., an adjunct professor of nutrition at New York University. Milton Stokes, R.D., chief dietitian at St. Barnabas Hospital in New York City, offers a third reason: “Your increased activity can also boost your appetite, causing you to eat too much,” he says. If you’re carb loading the evening before every long-distance run or constantly snacking on energy bars and protein drinks, you may be overdoing it. Both experts advise keeping a food diary for a full week of training to more accurately gauge—and control—your intake.

**Q** “I’m going on a road trip this summer. What’s the healthiest drive-through order, no matter where I go?”

**A** Salads topped with grilled—not fried—chicken are generally your best bets, according to Young. McDonald’s California Cobb Salad With Grilled Chicken (270 calories and 11 grams of fat), Wendy’s Mandarin Chicken Salad (360 calories and 15 g fat) and Burger King’s Fire-Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad (190 calories and just 7 g fat) are all diet-friendly choices. If you need more guidance, go online; most national chains post extensive nutritional information on their Web site. Avoid the hidden calories in dressings by choos-

ing a reduced-fat option, like Newman’s Own Low Fat Balsamic Vinaigrette, offered at McDonald’s (40 calories and 3 g fat per two-ounce packet). When in doubt, order a vinegar-based selection. “Creamy, cheese-based dressings are the worst offenders,” says Young.

**Q** “I’ve heard that Alzheimer’s disease is getting more common. Are there any foods I can eat to help prevent it?”

**A** “The same diet that protects against cardiovascular disease may also be protective against degenerative brain diseases,” says Stokes. He recommends getting plenty of omega-3 fatty acids from salmon and flaxseed, monounsaturated fats from olive oil and nuts, and nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Regular consumption of foods high in vitamin E—found in sunflower seeds, avocado and leafy greens—may also help, says Young. “Among all antioxidant vitamins, vitamin E has shown the most benefit against Alzheimer’s,” she says.

**Q** “When I eat kiwifruit, my throat feels extremely itchy. Is this a sign of a dangerous food allergy?”

**A** Probably not, says Young. You’re likely experiencing oral allergy syndrome, which is more of an annoyance than a serious problem. Itchy throat, lips or mouth, swelling and a tingly sensation are all common reactions. The usual solution is to avoid the offending food. “However, it’s important to make smart substitutions so you’re meeting all your nutritional needs,” Young says. Since kiwis are an excellent source of vitamin C, swap for citrus fruits or strawberries. In some instances, food allergies can cause a severe anaphylactic reaction and even death (for more information, go to [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org)). If your symptoms become more troublesome or you begin to experience difficulty breathing, contact a health professional immediately.

**Q** “I try to eat less at night to cut calories, but then I get ravenous before bed. What’s a low-cal but satisfying snack?”

**A** We love air-popped popcorn with a sprinkling of Parmesan cheese. Stokes shakes on a little Frank’s RedHot pepper sauce (traditionally used to make Buffalo wings) for an extra kick. If popcorn’s not your favorite snack, Stokes also suggests sugar-free gelatin or a high-fiber cereal. “Use the individually portioned cups and boxes to discourage bingeing,” he says. Whenever she’s up late with the munchies, Young makes herself this simple smoothie: “I blend a little skim milk and a handful of frozen fruit,” she says. •

