# In Stitches

These running pains are no laughing matter.

February 28, 2013 By Kate Ferguson

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If you're a runner and you've ever suffered a sharp, intense twinge in your side that makes you gasp in pain and stops you in your tracks, chances are you've experienced a side stitch. Doctors believe it's caused by a spasm of the diaphragm, the large muscle that's between the lungs and the abdomen. These pains can bring your training session to a quick and painful end, but the good news is that they can be treated and prevented.

To avoid side stitches, fitness experts advise people not to eat one to two hours before a run. What's more, they also suggest that runners drink more water during the day and strengthen the diaphragm with exercises.

According to Coach Jeff, a running expert who offers tips online, if you're stricken with a stitch, breathing exercises can help. "When you have a cramp, force your stomach to do the opposite of what it naturally wants to do, which is expand when you breathe in and contract when you breathe out," he explains. "Once you've got the rhythm down pat, make your breaths deep and forceful, taking all the air in that you can—every little gulp you can manage—and letting it all out, expelling every molecule. Do this a few times on the run, and your cramp will disappear."

For more information about how to breathe when running, visit Coach Jeff at RunnersConnect.net.

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