

Ep #269: Running After Weight Loss Surgery



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With Your Host

Jill Angie

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Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you've never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, your fat running coach. I help fat women over 40 to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. I have worked with thousands of women to help them achieve their running goals and now I want to help you.

Jill: Hey runners, so we have a super fun episode for you today. I have had dozens and dozens of requests for this episode and today we're actually going to talk about some of the challenges and considerations of becoming a runner or resuming running after you've had weight loss surgery. And I myself have not had weight loss surgery, but a lot of my clients have and have become very successful runners, were successful runners before and are successful runners afterwards.

So I thought the best place to find all of the information, all of the details, is to actually ask them. So I have five of my clients here today to talk about their experiences with running after weight loss surgery. They're going to give you the straight dope, is that a thing that the kids still say? On everything that you need to know to make it a success.

So today with me, I have Megan Shelton, Bethany Shields, Carmen Robles, Lisa Michaels, and Cindy Huffman. We're going to hear from each of them. I'm just going to go round robin and ask each of you to give a brief introduction. Let's go ahead and start with you, Megan.

Megan: Sure, I had lap band surgery in 2012, so 10 years ago. And I ran before I had surgery and continued running after surgery. And I am currently training for my furthest distance, which is a 10k.

Jill: Nice, I love it. Okay, how about you, Bethany?

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Bethany: Hey, guys, I had a vertical sleeve gastrectomy or VSG, or sleeve surgery, it has a lot of different names. And I had that in 2016 and actually my surgiversary comes up in two days. So I'll be six years out in two days. And I previously started running, prior to that surgery I was training for a 5k using Couch to 5k.

And I resumed that training shortly after my surgery and did my first 5k in November of that year on Thanksgiving. And my longest distance to date is a half marathon and I've done two of those. And I have plans to do more distance in the future.

Jill: Yay. Oh, I'm so excited. Okay, Carmen, how about you?

Carmen: Hi, I had a sleeve surgery seven years ago. I didn't run before my surgery, I'm kind of new to that. So I have been running for three years so I started running way after my surgery. My longest distance is a marathon. I have three, if I recall properly, three and one that I didn't finish.

Jill: We've all got one of those somewhere in our past. I love it. Okay, Cindy, how about you?

Cindy: Hi. I had RNY 12 years ago, so gastric bypass. And I was not a runner prior, I started walking and doing races about six to eight months after surgery with just like a 3k. And I thought I was going to die and I said I'm never going to do this again. And then the following year I ramped up to a half marathon.

I've done probably 75 to 100 half marathons over the last 12 years but I really didn't start running till three years ago. I was just a walker that would lace up my shoes and say, "Oh, there's a race, let me just go do it." My longest distance is ultras. I've done three full marathons and a handful of ultras.

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Jill: Oh my gosh, I love the variety of experiences that we have on this call. This is so good. Okay, and last but not least, Lisa.

Lisa: Hi, thanks for having me. I am Lisa, I had the VSG in December of 2016. Nobody in my family knows, so don't tell them. Seriously, I left the country and didn't tell them. But besides that, I don't know if I was necessarily a runner before then, I was always active in sports, played around with running a little bit.

But I haven't actually started running per se till a couple years ago. I do a lot of walking in my running. I've done a half marathon, a virtual Boston Marathon, I DNF'd a 50k trail last month. I made it to 28 miles and then I decided that I needed to work more than finish. But I'm repeating 50k next week in Mo' Bell.

Jill: Oh my gosh, okay. All right. So we've got everything from 10k to ultra-marathon as experience levels here. I absolutely love this because I think what I'm hearing is that having any kind of weight loss surgery does not preclude you from being able to fuel and hydrate yourself successfully for endurance running. So this is, I think this is amazing news for anybody listening.

But I guess one of the first things that I'd like to discuss, and maybe we can start with you, Megan, because you were a runner for a while before you had the surgery and you're a runner afterwards. So did you notice any difference in your energy levels or your stamina from before and after?

Megan: So I actually did not because my surgery didn't reduce my stomach at all to begin with. So when I was post op I kept asking my doctor if I could run again, can I do more than walk? And they kept me on a strict restriction for 12 weeks before I could actually do anything more than walk.

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Jill: Okay. Was that to let the surgery heal all the way up?

Megan: Correct, to let my stomach heal and then to start filling my band to reduce the size of my opening.

Jill: Oh, I got it. Okay, all right. And because, right, different types of, see this is how little I know about weight loss surgery. Can you explain a little bit about what that means, like the filling of the band?

Megan: Yes, so a lap band actually wraps around my stomach. So imagine a circular balloon that you can fill and then take out, it's just saline. So if I went to the doctor tomorrow, I could say could you please loosen my band and take out some saline or I need it tightened again, and they will go in and put more saline in to restrict my stomach more.

Jill: Okay. So you didn't have the band filled for several weeks?

Megan: Correct, they don't fill it right after surgery because it's literally a foreign object in your body and they want you to heal before you actually start filling it.

Jill: So then after they started filling it, did you then notice any differences in your endurance and your stamina with running?

Megan: I really didn't because they start off so slowly. And I just was chomping at the bit like, "You can go faster at this." And my doctor was real gradual, did not want to push it to make sure that everything was going to heal. There's potential slipping of the band, wanted to make sure all of that was normal.

Jill: Oh, so interesting. Is there any concern about slipping of the band due to running, due to kind of just the impact of running?

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Megan: Nope. No.

Jill: Okay.

Megan: Nothing athletic. The only time I really have pain sometimes is when I do core work.

Jill: Okay. So, Bethany, how about you? Because you had a different type of procedure done.

Bethany: Yeah, sure. My surgery was done laparoscopically, so it was just like five very small incisions. And I had a restriction, I believe it was like two weeks until, I healed very quick from my surgery. So I think I had like a two week post op appointment with my surgeon and I was like, "Can I please start running again?" Because we definitely had a six week weightlifting restriction where I was not able to lift anything, which was making me crazy because I was like really into strength training at that point.

But I asked him after two weeks, and he's like, "Oh, why don't you start with some light running?" Which, at the time, I really didn't know what light running meant. So I kind of blew it out the gate. And after that run I was like, "Okay, maybe I need to like just walk for a couple more weeks until I feel like everything is very settled." Because I was tired, very tired after that.

But as far as energy levels were for me, because it does reduce the amount of like nutrient absorption into your stomach, right? I found that pre op, actually with the liquid diet that we were on at that point, I had much less energy. And getting through any type of workout was challenging. But honestly, like a month out I was fine. So there was a period where my energy level was not quite what it normally was.

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Jill: Okay, so that's so interesting, it was the pre op.

Bethany: That's where I noticed it the most.

Jill: Yeah.

Bethany: I think that was like for, each surgeon is different with what they recommend for people. So for my particular team, they recommended that we be on liquids, which is highly restrictive caloric intake. So that's where I was like really kind of hitting the wall because I was still strength training at that point.

Jill: Okay. Oh yeah, I can imagine. Did anybody else have a similar experience that it was actually the pre op eating that kind of had you with like lower energy levels? Everybody is shaking their head. See, this is why I'm so glad that we've got several different people with different experiences, right? Because you're kind of hearing from all different types of circumstances and so forth.

So I'm curious what changes y'all had to make. Like when I think of traditional endurance fueling it's like I'll have something small before I go out for a run. And then like every, I don't know, every 30 minutes or so I'm eating a couple bites of things. And I'm drinking a lot of liquid. And I'm curious, and maybe, Lisa, this would be a good question for you. Is your post-surgery endurance fueling similar to that? Or do you have a different strategy?

Lisa: If I attempted to do that, I would probably vomit.

Jill: Okay, that's good to know.

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Lisa: I'm six years post op and, like you said, everybody is different. I still don't eat and drink at the same time, I can't.

Jill: Okay.

Lisa: I had the VSG, so 80 to 85% of my stomach was removed and then they stapled it back together, what was remaining or whatever. So with a VSG you still have the nutrient absorption, so you're not as likely to be deficient in your minerals or your vitamins, which is a good thing. But even for a 5k I carry a vest or I carry water with me because I can't grab at the aid station and chug it and throw it away. Otherwise, I'll probably vomit.

I take a sip or two and then probably 15 minutes later I might have a bite of something, maybe two bites. I graze the whole time. Even not training and like working all day it takes me probably an hour and a half to eat a meal. And it still does six years out. So yeah, my fueling is completely different.

For an early morning race, like starting 6:30 Eastern time, which is 5:30 my time, usually I don't sleep much the night before anyway, which is good because I'll have a snack or something. So every time I wake up, I eat. And then I go back to sleep, just so that I kind of have a meal before the start.

Jill: Yeah. And when I think about the types of things that a lot of runners will eat while they are doing endurance training, or even like not even endurance training but just in general, it's often foods that are like going to absorb real quick across the stomach lining, like Gu and gels and stuff like that. And I'm curious, are those foods, like can you tolerate that type of running fuel? Or have you had to shift to something else?

Lisa: I do a half a Gu at a time.

Jill: Oh, okay, awesome.

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Lisa: Because there's no digesting, so it's easy. I'll do Stinger Waffles, Ritz peanut butter crackers work pretty good. But I don't eat the whole package, I have one, maybe two and then I wait. Pretzels, anything that's processed, because it's already digested. Protein shakes work pretty well, pre and post. But yeah.

Jill: Awesome. Megan, yes, did you have something to add to that?

Megan: I'm just learning how to fuel now, so I actually have to take in fuel for the 10k when a lot of people don't because I can't eat a big enough meal before that race to fuel through the six miles. And I have a fear of things getting stuck.

So when Lisa is mentioning Ritz crackers I immediately tense up because food can literally block my opening. And then I wouldn't be able to hydrate and it would come back up instead of going down through my stomach. So I am focusing on learning how to fuel with actual Gu because those, it's called a slippery food and can actually slip through my band so I don't have to worry about that and I can continue to hydrate.

Jill: Okay. So that's, I mean that's fascinating, right? So the lap band is going to give you a totally different, not totally different, but somewhat different fueling experience than somebody who's had VSG just because of the configuration of your stomach afterwards.

Megan: Correct.

Jill: Okay, yeah, thank you for sharing that. Carmen, I want to shift over to you. And I know that you started running afterwards, but I'm curious what types of fuel you are using to fuel your training.

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Carmen: So I was using before, so I have some challenges in addition of having the surgery because I have diabetes. So I have all the time the internal fight of what I can take that is enough for fueling, but it's not going to mess up my sugar. Because what I need is really that spike of sugar, that is not good for my body. So I try to be careful with that.

So what I try to do, for example if I have race in the morning, I do every morning a protein shake that has super greens, that have fiber in there. And I try to take it maybe one hour or two hours before the race start time so at least that already went down and it's going to take me time to really drink it because I cannot sit down and drink it at once having a sleeve surgery.

And then for fueling during the race I was using before, when I start fueling, when I start running, I start trying the Gu and the waffle, the Stinger Waffle. But the problem with those for me, they are too sweet to my mouth and I cannot take water to put it down because I need time in between. So I stopped using that because it's too sweet for me.

So what I do, I love to take a slice of bread and put almond butter and just cut it into small squares and I carry a Ziploc bag in my belt. So it's just a tiny bit of that, I chew it, it's easy on the go. I wait a little bit and when I'm drinking water or Gatorade or whatever liquid that I will have, I just basically take a sip and keep going and take a sip and keep going.

For example for a 5k for me I will carry a belt because I learned my lesson the hard way to be carrying something for just in case. When I was training for my very first first half marathon I did the mistake that I forgot to carry something. I didn't have too much information, I was kind of doing the things on my own and my sugar went so down that I was having goose bumps, I was so dizzy when I was into, I think, maybe seven or eight miles. And then I realized oops, I was supposed to carry something.

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So now just as a precaution because my sugars sometimes get later up and down I carry my belt, I carry a snack, I carry my bread, or a nut bar that is not too sweet to my mouth and I carry liquids.

If I wake up when I'm going for a training run in the morning, it's basically one slice of bread with almond butter that I'm going to have and then I will hit the door as soon as I have that. And that should be good enough for me.

And I learned to, in long distance races to just take sips of water and to don't, regardless that I feel maybe so thirsty to don't take big chunks or try to put too much time because first of all, I'm going to throw up. Like Lisa said, our stomach doesn't like those kinds of things. And second, it's going to make me pee because I'm taking more.

So I have been learning during my trainings to give my body the quantity of water that I need to use for the body to cool down and not too much that it's going to make me pee so I don't need to be taking bathroom breaks.

Jill: Okay, and that sounds like it's probably a balance that you have to practice.

Carmen: Yeah.

Jill: Kind of trial and error.

Carmen: Yes.

Jill: So, Cindy, I'd love to hear from you on your fueling. Like what are your favorite types of fueling? And what are some of the challenges that you've had?

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Cindy: When I first started doing races I fueled a little bit differently. I was mostly just protein, pretzels, Slim Jims, things like that. As I got to doing more races and a little bit farther out I had to experiment because Gu did not work for me at all, too much sugar. And being with a gastric bypass patient, they tell us kind of anything over 10 grams is too much.

So it's totally, I would try it, sometimes a little more successfully than others. But you're knowing where a bathroom is if not. And to add challenges to that I'm also celiac and have IBS. So it's one of those a lot of the traditional things or like the Stinger Waffles, certain things are gluten free certain things aren't. So I always had to know ahead of time or try them on myself.

But as I've gotten into more ultras and the longer distances and the Ragnars and the marathons I've found a couple of products that really work well. E-Gel is a product that is low in sugar, so it's got electrolytes already added in. So people that can't take Gu, a lot of times I recommend that they try one or buy the sample pack.

And I found e-Gel about every three miles works for me. So if I'm doing a half or something like that it's three to four miles, I'm good. And I just keep doing that. They also sell, same company sells a product called e-Fuel and it's a liquid product. So if I was doing some of my ultras a lot of times if it's, say a four mile lap or something, I'll drink one of those and just not fuel and use that as fuel.

So it's kind of a, I don't usually take the e-Fuel and the e-Gel with me, it's one or the other. But I found like in the summers and that the e-Fuel works really well, I don't use it as much in the winter. And I've also found for my longer races a Powerade Zero or a Gatorade zero somewhere, if I'm doing around a half marathon or over 15 miles, something like that, around the 13 mile mark, that really helps balance my electrolytes.

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But e-Fuel has the electrolytes right in it. So it's just one of those products they don't sell it anywhere but direct to consumer. So Crank Sports is the manufacturer of those. And if anybody wants my sponsor number or whatever, referral number, I'd be happy to share that with people. Because then you eventually get referral points or something fun.

I love them and I share them with all my running friends. I'm quite liberal about, "Here try one, try one, I think you'll like it." So mostly, it's e-Gels in my thing. And occasionally I'll do protein, like Carmen was saying, but I have to put it like on a tortilla that's gluten free or something like that. So I'll put some peanut butter or nut butter on one of those and take it with me and fuel with that too because I'm still a protein versus a sugar girl.

Jill: Okay. And what was the manufacturer of the e-Gel?

Cindy: It's Crank Sports.

Jill: C-R-A-N-K?

Cindy: Yep, Crank Sports.

Jill: Okay, we'll have a link to that in the show notes. And I'll get your code and we'll put that in the show notes as well for everyone.

Okay, so let's kind of like ease into hydration a little bit because we've started sort of talking about electrolytes. But I'd love to know, first of all, does anyone here successfully use a Nuun as an electrolyte replacement? Or does the carbonation bother your stomach?

Yeah, okay, Lisa is nodding yes. Megan is nodding yes. But, Bethany, you are using Nuun. But in general, so we've got Cindy is using the e-Gel, what's it called again, the liquid?

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Cindy: E-Fuel.

Jill: E-Fuel.

Cindy: I use Nuun a little bit of like pre-hydration the day or two before a race, but I found that it's not really one of my favorites.

Jill: Okay. Is it like just you don't like the flavor or is there discomfort?

Cindy: It's the carbonation, I think.

Jill: It's the carbonation.

Cindy: I'm a non-carbonation girl for 12 years, and so even that little bit, I can tolerate it but then I don't like it. You know what I'm saying? And my body just is like, "I'd rather not."

Jill: Okay, well that's good to know. Yeah. So what are you guys using for electrolyte replacement?

Megan: I actually use Propel. So you can buy bottles of Propel or they sell powders too. So I travel for my races so I can buy the little packs of powder and just shake it up and I'm good to go.

Jill: Okay, love it. And, Bethany, you're using Nuun?

Bethany: Yeah, I typically will use Nuun. On longer runs though I find that I like Tailwind.

Jill: Okay.

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Bethany: Just because it has the carb in there, so I'm not having to worry about fueling and drinking all at the same time.

Jill: Oh, that's good to know. Okay. What about you, Carmen?

Carmen: I don't use anything in particular. I go with the Gatorade Zero just to try to control the sugar some before the race. And have, usually in my belt I will have a bottle of water, plain water, and another one of Gatorade.

Jill: And then what about you, Lisa?

Lisa: I do a lot of the powders from Walmart. They've kind of changed over the years. I like Tailwind, which is not there. I did LMNT at the 50k and that was really good, I liked that. I do a lot of the Mio. But any electrolytes that I do, I tend to dilute down pretty good. And in my vest I have a plain water and electrolytes, but that's only been since I got further out from surgery because I had a hard time with plain water after surgery for quite a while.

Jill: Okay.

Lisa: I do chicken noodle soup broth also.

Jill: Oh, interesting.

Lisa: Like for breakfast or the night before to stay warm.

Jill: Because it's salty.

Lisa: The salt in it helps, yeah.

Jill: Does anybody use salt tabs just as a supplement? Bethany and Cindy and Lisa, okay.

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Bethany: Yeah, I'm one of those salty sweaters so I find that when it's really hot and humid that I need the extra salt tabs.

Jill: Yeah, okay.

Cindy: Yeah, I love the salt tabs and I keep them on hand and carry them all the time.

Jill: What about caffeine? Can you talk to me about, is anybody sensitive to caffeine since their surgery? No, okay.

Cindy: Yes, I am.

Jill: Yes, oh, Cindy is, okay. And was that like something new post-surgery?

Cindy: Not really, I think I was always an unsweet tea drinker and a coffee drinker prior, but they took us off of it for, I don't remember exactly how long because it's been so long. But six months or so that we had to kind of limit and I went back to drinking unsweet tea, which I can still drink in moderation, but I really have to kind of watch because I find out that I love it so then I start, that's my one vice and I'll be like, "Oh, it's my only vice."

And then all of a sudden I'll be like whacked out on caffeine. And just like, how much did you drink? Oh, just a couple, you know, two gallon bottles or something. And I'm like, yeah, so I found that I am sensitive to it. But if I can be conscious of it and don't overdo, I'm much better. Much, much better.

Jill: Okay.

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Cindy: But I've found that I've tried like Tailwind and some of those and even the caffeinated ones, the non-caffeinated ones, anything that has caffeine is enough to shove me over the edge.

Jill: Yeah, and so many products have caffeine now that you have to be really careful if you're sensitive to it. So I was curious if anybody else, but so it sounds, Cindy, I'm wondering if your sensitivity is just because you were off caffeine for six months before.

Cindy: And that could be, I don't know.

Jill: Yeah, caffeine is so, so weird. Okay, so here's another question I have for you guys, is do things, and I think the answer is yes but feel free to just kind of like unmute yourself and chime in. But have things changed for you over time? Like something that worked for you maybe two months post up, like two or three years later you either found a better way to do it or you can't do that thing anymore and you've had to find a new way to do it?

Cindy: Definitely for me because I evolved through the protein pretzels and even trying to Gu and some of those. And a lot of the products they worked for a short while and Nuun and things like that but totally don't anymore. So mine has totally evolved into the e-Gel/e-Fuel, you know, a couple of things. Like if I'm somewhere I can do maybe a honey stinger, but one during my half marathon, just not, I can't do a whole bunch of them.

Jill: Okay.

Megan: Mine, actually my band tightness changes with my hormones, which has really just started since last year after, I'll add a layer of complexity, after giving birth.

Jill: Okay.

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Carmen: In my case when I started running I was just trying all the fueling that all the runners try. And I thought that that was the thing to go. But then later on when I noticed that my stomach doesn't like it so much, and I struggled the liquid down to take out the flavor from my mouth. I decided to just go with normal food.

I prefer it to be races, and you were going to laugh at this, but my first marathon I was having boiled eggs with me. Okay? So I was having boiled eggs, my bread with almond butter, I don't even remember what else. Maybe I was having a waffle stinger for just in case, emergency case, plus my Gatorade and my water.

And I eat my bread, oh I was going to a race because I ate extra protein. Something that I notice in term of energy is the vitamins. I need to take my vitamins every day. If I forget, that's a big difference. And so that's something that is very important. And for people that have bariatric surgery, that's something that you need to continue for the rest of your life.

Jill: Yeah. Yeah, I'm seeing a lot of head nodding, head nodding at that. Yeah. So let's kind of switch tactics or switch topics a little bit. And because you've all had like different types of surgery, what are some of the side effects of the surgery, aside from the fueling, that may impact your running or that did impact your running that you had to find a way to manage around?

Carmen: I would say that it's planning. So cannot eat too much at once. And we need to prepare our bodies for the races and for the running that we're going to do. We need really to plan what things we're going to eat the night before, whether we have enough carbs in there. We need to focus on the protein because that's what we get told all the time and because it's required due to the surgery.

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And during the surgery, in preparation for the surgery they teach you how to eat and what you will be hearing all the time is like focus on your protein. Focus on your protein and then if you have the space in your tummy then go for the carbs. But then now we're running and we need the carbs.

So it's kind of planning so you can get everything that you need to fuel your body for the race, but then to get all the nutrients because it's going to take you so long to really put all that down. So to get the right food the night before. Then how early do you need to wake up so you can start preparing your body for being ready for the moment of the race or the running?

So that's something else, if I wake up and I don't have too much time and I'm going for a run I will take just my slice of bread and my almond butter. That maybe will take me 15 minutes, a bite here, preparing the stuff, another bite to at least have something in my system.

But if I'm going to race we're talking about I need to wake up maybe three hours before so I can have my shake, I can put my vitamins down because I cannot take them on an empty stomach because they're going to make me feel sick. And then wait that hour or two and then when I'm close to this timeline and maybe half an hour before it starts, I start chewing my slice of bread so then it's down for the time to go.

So it's more planning than anything, that's what it is. Because we cannot do the things like, okay, it's time to go, I will put all this down and I'm ready to head out the door, we cannot do that.

Jill: Okay, Megan, what did you have to add?

Megan: I would reiterate with planning so much. I'm building up, my goal is to do an ultra so I hired a nutrition coach. Hi, Bethany. And then I also, so I have to modify, especially with core work because with a band I have a port

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where they can put the saline, put it in and take it out of. So it's actually hooked into my abdominal wall.

So I have the potential that can actually twist or turn. So when I said earlier I have pain sometimes when I do ab work, sometimes laying flat on my stomach can potentially hurt that, so I have to modify.

Jill: Okay, that's good to know because core work is pretty important for runners. So what are your go-to moves to strengthen your core?

Megan: So I actually am falling in love with, and even the five minute ones are kicking my butt during lunch breaks. So Peloton, Rebecca has the standing core. So I don't have to worry about any exercises that I'm going to be laying down. So I find that I can do standing core work a lot better. And oh buddy, I am feeling that the next day.

Jill: Oh, I love that. Okay, so standing core work is a nice little hack for lap bands. I love it.

Bethany, did you have something to add?

Bethany: Yeah, I was just going to piggyback off of Carmen. I think that planning piece is like max importance. Even if you're just going out on like a short hike, you really have to plan ahead for having some sort of something to eat with you. Whether that's a granola bar or something.

And honestly, the other piece, I think, that Carmen was tapping into is sometimes we either forget or we like to think about the time that we ate before we had surgery. And we tend not to think of how long it takes us to consume things.

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So like when Carmen was talking about her protein shake in the morning, I don't know about you guys, but for me to choke down a protein shake can take over an hour, easy. And then you've got to give it time to like digest. So it's just, you know, that amount of liquid, and it's also like learning to sip.

So the other piece of this that I would talk about is kind of the experimentation that comes along with the fueling and the hydration, and just learning the small sips as you're going with your electrolytes, with your hydration. But also experimenting what are the types of fuel that you're comfortable trying?

For me, I am a person who is terrified of having an accident during a run, so I tend to avoid fuels that are like super, like Gu, that are like very concentrated. So I'll try to do like a slightly, I mean, they're all processed, but a slightly less processed that I know it won't have that like fast impact.

And I don't know that it's going to result in a bathroom trip, but I personally am just afraid of it being a situation. But I think for everyone, just like taking the time to experiment to find out what works for your specific needs.

Jill: Yeah. And for our listeners, Bethany is actually a nutrition coach so she does know what she's talking about. She has the creds behind it. Lisa, what about you, what would you like to add?

Lisa: After surgery, I would say that dehydration besides for the eating portion was huge. Your urine should not be brown and mine was at some point. I could go for an eight or nine mile walk in Iowa in July, so it's like 90s with almost 100% humidity with an eight ounce bottle of water and have some left over because that's how little I could drink at a time.

So dehydration is huge. The food and fueling is really important experiment because things tend to work for a little while and then they stop working.

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And then you have to figure out what works again. And then those will stop working and then sometimes you can go back to the original ones.

But for those of us who like real food, in addition to the Gu, nobody, whether you've had surgery or not eat correctly anyways. The food should be liquid before you swallow it and we all forget that. So if you slow down the eating, and actually chew long enough, you know, digesting it is going to be a lot easier and keeping it down is going to be a lot easier.

But also, hormones are huge. After surgery a lot of people have thyroid issues. You can end up with Hashimoto, so you go hyper and then you drop down to hypo. So that can give you some mood issues or energy levels and fatigue, or just brain fogginess. And then you're not sure if it's the hormones or if it's from the weight loss surgery.

So yeah, it all kind of plays in so that you can go out and do your run.

Jill: What I'm hearing is that there's like, that you have to be really vigilant and paying a lot of attention to the signals that your body is giving you. And constantly be kind of like, is that something I need to be thinking about? Or like how did you all create that familiarity with what your body normally feels like post-surgery versus, oh, this is something that is new and different and I need to be concerned about it or I need to think about it?

Cindy: Well, I had a little bit of a challenge because post-surgery I became very carsick. So I would go to eat with somebody and it just wouldn't stay down. And I was never carsick a day in my life. So for a short, I would say, at least six months, we had Ziploc bags in every car. Like a box of Ziploc bags, if I was traveling with you, was my go-to.

And I had friends that kind of knew, they were like just leave her alone for a little bit. She'll be fine in a few more minutes. And they'd kind of run

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interference. But once that passed, that was like a thing of the past and it was all well.

When Carmen was talking about the pre-race fueling thing, it kind of changed over a while because I know at the beginning it was like you need the carbs for energy, but I need the protein. So what somebody else might fuel with before a race definitely wasn't my choice.

But I found like, for example, chili worked for me. And people would be like, "You're having chili the night before a race? That doesn't even sound like a good idea." And I'm like, it worked for my body. My body said it was a good balance of the beans, it was a good balance of the meat and it was like okay.

But then I found after a while that was, like I said, that wasn't working for me. My two big go-tos now the night before is either a good gluten free pizza from my favorite pizza place full of veggies on top, or a seafood boil because then I get the protein, there's a little bit of potatoes and corn in there for the carbs.

But some of my friends are like, "What? I wouldn't fuel with that to save my life the night before a race." But I'm like, sorry, that works for me. That's where I'm going. And, you know, we keep it moving.

And another food that works really well, even during my longer races and ultras are pickles. You get the salt, you get the energy, you know, it's like pickles and pickle juice. So all the ultras I do definitely have pickles at.

Jill: I love it. Pickles are like the new hot thing for runners.

Cindy: Yes.

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Megan: When I was closer to my surgery I used to write down what wouldn't get stuck and what would. So I kind of changed my eating up that way. Now that I'm further away from surgery I don't have to do that as much, however I do that for my running.

I keep a food journal of what I eat pre the night before a long run and then even what flavors of things are working for me while I run so I can refer back to that. So I'm going back to the old tricks that worked when I first had surgery to now, as I increase distance it's working again.

Jill: So you keep like a detailed journal of, you know, like as part of your fueling and how it's working?

Megan: Right, so when I first had surgery I did it for everything I ate.

Jill: Okay.

Megan: And now I've reduced it to as I increase my distance I want to know what's going to work and not work for my body so I can repeat what works.

Jill: I mean, I think that's really a great tip because it's just collecting data that you can use to see patterns and make decisions. And instead of, like so I think when we rely just on our memories we're like, "Oh, I don't know, I think I had a good run after I ate that thing but I can't remember."

And if you if you can look back in your running journal and be like, "Oh yeah, I threw up halfway through this run because I ate this thing. Like, let's not do that again." Right?

Megan: Yes. And I'm a data nerd, so I actually have ranked like flavors of waffles that I have liked and what works and what doesn't.

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Jill: Oh, I absolutely love this. Anyone else have anything to add to that?

Carmen: Going back to, I think that we all have been saying the same thing, but it's like trial and error basically. And to understand we have running friends that don't have surgery, that maybe they will try, they will not understand the way that we eat. And they will be like, "Let's go eat this."

And I think that the people that we have surgery, we need to be very conscious of what works for us and to not go under the pressure of the friends or the group and understand that we have some special needs. And we fuel a little differently. And it's basically trial and error, in addition to how frequently you need to fuel if you're running a long distance.

I know that it's kind of like some general rules that maybe people will say five miles or one hour depending on the time. But I think that that's very individual too because it depends on how much you eat before, how your body responds. Anyway you're not going to have a big fuel.

Like I mentioned I just take a bite. And I keep running and that bite is going to last, I don't know, a quarter mile. And then I'm going to wait a quarter mile to get a little sip. And I will wait. And maybe I will be good with whatever I have just before the race or the run up to maybe five miles because my body is used to that. But I know that when I cross the five miles, I will need to have a bite.

And it's good, the things that people see in books and websites and things like that, but we need to be very conscious and we need to try. And we don't need to take it like that's how it should be. Because all the bodies are different and including people have the same type of surgery, their body responds differently.

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Jill: So let me ask you guys this as we're starting to wrap up a little bit, what has worked for you when people have asked you questions as a runner like, hey, why do you feel so differently? Or why can't you go to the big pasta dinner the night before? Which by the way, I've done that once, gone to a pasta dinner the night before a race, and I felt like such shit the next day. Do not recommend. 10 out of 10 do not recommend.

But do you guys have any go-to phrases or sentences or just ways that you kind of explain to people like hey, this is what I'm eating this way and you don't need to worry about me?

Bethany: I just say like the same thing that I say to everybody that I work with, is that it's all individual. So how I eat is going to be different from how Megan eats, how Lisa eats, how Carmen eats. Our bodies have individual requirements and needs, and how we have to fuel them to do the thing that we want to do might not look like the way that you do it because sports nutrition is not something that is like one size fits all. Everybody has to make it work for their individual body.

Cindy: When Carmen related the going out with friends and having that pressure, the good thing with my circle is a good portion of us, not all of us have had weight loss surgery, I think there's only two of us. But a good portion of them have no gallbladders so they're always like, no, I have to be careful of this or I have to be careful of that.

And there's so many of us, like I have food allergies, my friend is a vegetarian but she'll eat seafood. We have a couple others with milder food allergies. So we're quite all the special needs food groups. And we're kind of used to going out like that and knowing who's going to take care of what and who. So, you know, there's a lookout of these two or three types of restaurants work well with us, let's aim for there and then go from there.

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Jill: Yeah, I love that. I love that. So cultivate, I love that you said special needs foods or whatever. Cultivate a variety of friends who all have like different eating choices so that everybody just like understands exactly what's going on. I love it.

The final question I had for you guys today because weight loss surgery can result in loose skin, right? Or just your body changing, obviously. And I'm curious if any of you have any really great solutions for chafing, or rashes, or anything like that that you're going to experience as a runner anyway.

But I think like when you have loose skin or when you have like, you know, like you're a runner at this size and then your body changes shape and size, like you are going to notice probably chafing and rashes and so forth in different places. So what solutions do you guys use and what do you recommend for people?

Megan: I am a huge fan of Body Glide. And I have to shower immediately when I get home. I cannot keep my run clothes on because of the loose skin, I do develop a rash quite quickly. But if I can actually shower and get everything and the sweat off, I tend to do okay. So my biggest tip is as soon as you're home and you've stretched, hop in the shower and clean yourself.

Jill: love it.

Bethany: I think the other thing is like if you have any sort of specific issues, if you have a lot of loose skin, that you're noticing like that would be probably a good time to call your doctor and get a prescription because they have prescriptions for all of that stuff. And that way you get a handle on it before it gets out of control.

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Jill: Oh, like a prescription chafing balm?

Bethany: There's usually like a powder. A powder that I've used is Nystatin. And I think there's also some sort of cream. I've not used the cream, but there are also different creams for rashes and stuff.

Jill: Yeah, yeah, that's a good point because a rash can get infected and can become like, right, and then it can become sort of a chronic thing. And so yeah, it's like prescription products. I love the idea of just like, as soon as you notice like, oh, this might become a problem, like on the phone with the doc, this is what's going on.

And I mean, hopefully they'll kind of be having that conversation with you early on after your surgery. But, you know, every doctor is different.

Okay. All right, so we're going to do lightning round. Everybody, I just want your one biggest piece of advice for somebody considering being a runner after weight loss surgery or returning to running after weight loss surgery. And we're going to start with you, Lisa, go.

Lisa: Listen to your body. If you do your research, just know that there's not a whole lot out there. So the main thing is play around with it and see what works for you.

Jill: All right, what about you, Cindy?

Cindy: Do it. Your body can do a lot more than you've tried and it's usually your mind that's going to stop you before the body will.

Jill: Yes, you know I love that. Carmen, what about you?

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Carmen: Challenge yourself, go out there, just practice. You can do it. If you have this surgery it just means that you might not be capable of doing things that you were doing before. I would say you will be able to be capable of doing way more because that has been my case. It's just that you will do it a little different than other people. It's trial and error, don't feel bad when things don't go well. Just keep trying to keep moving forward.

Jill: Thank you. Bethany, what about you?

Bethany: You are capable of way more than you think you are capable of, for sure. And just always bring water with you. Don't be in a situation where you don't have water when you're like halfway up a mountain.

Jill: Sounds like you're speaking from experience there. What about you, Megan?

Megan: Run/walk is a great introduction to running. And the running community is the most supportive community. And TMI is never an issue when you're talking to other runners, especially when you experience things for post-surgery side effects.

Jill: Yeah, I love it. And I think there's a lot more runners out there that have had weight loss surgery than, because it's not like people wear a sign saying, hey, right? So you're not alone, there are a lot of other people out there. I think just, like you said, asking the questions, you'd be surprised at how many people are going to be able to help there.

So here's what we're going to do, I'm going to get everybody's kind of Instagram and Facebook information as you're willing to share it. And we're going to have all of it in the show notes so you can follow these five amazing women on their running journeys and continue to learn from them and cheer them on.

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Thank you so much, everyone, for being here today. I really appreciate you sharing your experiences so openly and generously. So thank you so much.

Hey, real quick before you go, if you enjoyed listening to this episode you have got to check out Up And Running. It's my 30 day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you have always wanted to be. Head on over to notyouraveragerunner.com/upandrrunning to join. I would love to be a part of your journey.