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## Porto-potty power

Jordan D. Metzl, MD

I was standing in line with 300 of my closest friends at the Eagleman triathlon in June. It was six in the morning; pre-race jitters were abundant. While chatting with my brother Jamie about the usual stuff brothers talk about, I was also eavesdropping on the conversations of others in line.

"Dear Lord, please let everything work for me in the port-o-potty" a fellow racer a few places back was saying.

Indeed, race preparation is not complete when last-minute nutrition needs are taken care of, the bike has been checked and the transition site is arranged properly. No, sir. Race preparation is not complete until the visit to the

port-o-potty has been successful.

The truth is that bad bathroom prep can ruin a race. Racers have succumbed to any number of gastrointestinal emergencies. None of them pretty.

Good bathroom prep is dependant on a phenomenon called gastrointestinal transit time. Some foods, such as fiber-heavy and carbohydrate-heavy foods, move quickly through the GI track, often completing the trip in 12 hours or less. And some, fat-laden foods in particular, take up to 36 hours to pass.

In planning your pre-race bathroom strategy, make sure that the day before, and particularly the meal before the race, are heavy in foods that won't cause problems the next morning. That means that pre-race meals should be consumed about 10-12 hours before the race starts,

and fatty foods should be avoided.

Caffeine also strongly increases muscular contraction in the intestines, moving things along quickly. For that reason, caffeine should be taken two hours before the race if needed, not immediately before.

Of course, even the best-made plans can fail. For that reason, many racers carry toilet paper with them during the race. If there are such things as better and worse reasons for a bad race, poor bathroom preparation has to be among the very worst. Plan your pre-race meals effectively and this problem can often be avoided. ▲

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