



FIT FOR LIFE

Doubled up

... with laughter not with pain. Carol Westmorland focuses on stiches and how to remedy them

Laughter, the throwing-your-head-back type, can only be shared with someone close. By my great good fortune I have two people in my life where words do not have to be spoken. The laughter I spoke of can erupt at any moment, and those moments I cherish. Because we think alike, we sisters find the same things funny.

I am also lucky enough to have a very immature husband, who supplies heaps of the stuff. Laughter, that is. I hear him converse with 'The Sunshines' over morning tea preparation and have a quiet giggle to myself.

Father and I laugh at life's absurdities and often things we have picked up in the press. Mum would be unable to contain herself if one of us went flying and landed on our bum - that wicked observational humour.

Being in stitches can, in other situations, not be a laughing matter. A stitch is thought to be a reduction in blood supply to the diaphragm - the muscle we use to breathe, and it is something runners dread. The legs greedily grab that blood supply leaving the diaphragm depleted, hence the stitch, and it is more likely to happen when you go flat out.

Could this be you? It happens to the very experienced. Following rules will help. Eat right; cottage cheese and turkey followed by bananas with peanut butter are a perfect pre-run fuel up - eaten three hours before your run and easy to digest.



'A STITCH IS THOUGHT TO BE A REDUCTION IN BLOOD SUPPLY TO THE DIAPHRAGM'

Pattern your breathing with your foot strike. A good regular breath will always keep things steady, circulating an efficient blood supply.

If the worst happens, and you still get a stitch, then one of the quirky - but effective - remedies is to exhale sharply as you strike the opposite foot to the side of the stitch. So, if your stitch is on the right side exhale sharply as your left foot strikes down. Not every strike. Tension releases and you will stride on with an enormous grin.

You will not be in stitches but you will be happy. I promise.



Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.uk