

# Q+A

## ASK THE EXPERTS

**Q** Is it okay to go for a run when I have a cold?

**A** Running when you have a cold is usually fine, unless you have a fever, in which case you should stay in. In fact, there's evidence that running can improve circulation and reduce stress, which boosts the immune system, so a run may help improve your symptoms. Take extra care to stay hydrated and dress appropriately when you go out. Pay close attention to how your symptoms are affected by the run, and take a day or two off if they worsen, especially if you're feeling weak.

—**JOHN ENAYATI, M.D., M.P.H.**, is a runner and founder of Century City Wellness Center in Los Angeles ([enayatimd.com](http://enayatimd.com)).

**Q** I've seen people running or walking backward. What are the benefits of that?

**A** Backward walking and running boost cardiovascular fitness, work the quads, and



improve balance. And because you tend to reach back farther for each step when you're going backward, it also helps increase stride length, which can help you pick up the pace going forward. Putting your body in reverse takes some practice, so start out by walking backward slowly on a track or treadmill, using the

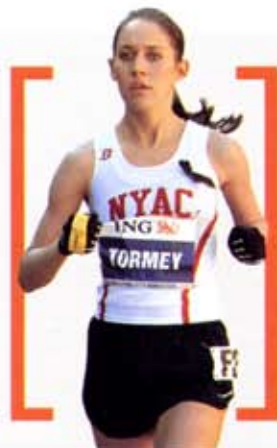
handrails for balance. Build up to two 20-minute sessions a week, alternating between backward and forward walking. Once that feels comfortable, progress to running backward.

—**MICHELLE VAN OTTEN** is a San Jose-area running, fitness, and triathlon coach ([ultimate-potential.com](http://ultimate-potential.com)).

**Q** I'm a fit runner, so why can't I keep up with my bike buddies when we ride?

**A** Cycling uses different muscles than running. Running draws more on the hamstrings and glutes, while cycling involves the quadriceps and calves more. As with any activity, it takes a while for the muscles to adapt and grow stronger. To keep up with your cycling friends, gradually increase your time on the bike, taking longer and more frequent rides. When you're in the saddle, try to focus on keeping your upper body still and spinning the pedals in a rapid cadence, even as you're shifting gears.

—**JOLENE WILKINSON, M.S.**, is a pro triathlete and coach in Utah ([pacificfit.net](http://pacificfit.net)).



## THE WORKOUT

### Ladder Step-Down

**WHY** To build speed and endurance

**WHO RECOMMENDS IT** Pete Rea, a coach for ZAP Fitness.

**Caitlin Tormey** (left) did this workout on a treadmill leading up to her win at the 2008 More Half-Marathon (1:20:13).

Do repeats of seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one minute. Run slightly faster each time, progressing from marathon to 5-K pace. Recover in between with easy running for half the time of the previous interval. "This develops speed-based endurance for a 5-K and anaerobic-threshold work for the marathon," says Rea.



Submit your questions to [asktheexperts@rodale.com](mailto:asktheexperts@rodale.com).

VICTOR SALLERPHOTO/ROD

IN A 2004 STUDY, WALKING BACKWARD ON A TREADMILL AT A 5% INCLINE BOOSTED HEART RATE BY 17% VERSUS FORWARD RUNNING.