



Children and Sports Drinks

Powerade®, Gatorade®, and Vitamin Water® are just a few of the many popular sports drinks that are enjoyed by many children and youth. While these may be refreshing and provide hydration, they may not always be the best choice for young athletes and budding outdoor enthusiasts.

How Necessary are Sports Drinks?

If your child is looking for something to quench his or her thirst during a sport or activity, water may be a better option. **Water** is the perfect source of hydration for **regular exercise that is shorter than 60 minutes**. So, for a typical children's soccer game, water will work! Help your child get in the habit, too, of preparing ahead for his or her athletic practices and events by hydrating with water *before* the activity begins.

If a child is participating in **strenuous exercise for longer than 60 minutes straight**, then a **sports drink** may be a better choice. Like water, sports drinks contain fluid to keep the body hydrated. They also contain electrolytes like sodium and potassium which help maintain fluid balance in the body, and sugar and calories to help replenish the body's source of energy. However, it takes about 60 minutes of strenuous exercise and sweating until the body will be depleted of fluid and electrolytes.

Sports drinks are meant for sports

If children are simply drinking sports drinks when they are thirsty as a replacement to other beverages like water or milk, then it is likely providing them with extra sugar and calories, which could lead to weight gain. So stick with water, non-fat/low-fat milk, or 100% no-sugar-added fruit juice as the go-to-drink instead! Limit juice to 4 ounces per day, however. Though 100% juice has nutrients, it also contains natural sugars and calories.

Make water more fun and refreshing!

For something a little different, try adding slices of orange, lime, cucumber, strawberries, or melon to your child's water bottle for their next game or activity.

