



Hydration for the Athlete

During exercise, sweat helps to cool the body from the inside out. When you sweat, your body loses vital fluids and electrolytes. Too much sweat and not enough fluids can lead to dehydration, injury and poor performance.

How much fluid does the athlete need?

Everybody requires a different amount of fluids. The environment temperature, intensity of the exercise, body size, gender, length of exercise, and fitness all effect fluid losses and fluid needs. Meeting with a sports dietitian is the ideal way to develop a hydration plan that fits your needs.

Proper hydration varies between individuals, and thirst is not always a good indicator for athletes. Urine color is the easiest way for athletes to monitor their hydration. Dark colored urine, the color of apple juice, is a sign of dehydration. Drink water until urine is the color of lemonade.

How often does the athlete need to hydrate?

Athletes need to hydrate before, during, and after exercise. During exercise, rehydrate with water. For bouts of exercise lasting longer than an hour, sports drinks may be more appropriate. Create a drinking schedule during exercise to make sure hydration needs are being met. Take a sip of water every 10-15 minutes!

If you are unable to rehydrate during exercise, plan accordingly. Swimming is a good example of an exercise during which it is difficult to constantly rehydrate. Keep in mind you are still sweating. Make sure you drink plenty before and after exercise.

Resource: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Website

Know the warning signs of dehydration

- Thirst
- Flushed skin
- Increased body temperature
- Faster pulse rate
- Decreased exercise capacity
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Difficulty breathing



My sweat tastes salty!

Sodium is a key mineral involved in hydration. Water and sodium move together, so it is common to have salty-tasting sweat. Replenish sodium by consuming sodium-containing drinks or foods after exercise. If exercise lasts longer than 2 hours, be sure to supplement your diet with more salty foods.