

Sports Nutrition: Eating for Peak Performance

Hydration and Fluids

It is essential for athletes to drink enough fluids for top performance. If your body weight drops by 1% from losing fluids, your performance will suffer and you will fatigue early. If you lose too much fluid through heavy sweating, you reduce your ability to provide adequate circulation to both the muscles and body surface. This may in turn endanger your health since fluid in the blood transports glucose to the muscles and carries away lactic acid.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that you drink 4 to 8 ounces of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes of hard running. Use the following tips to keep you hydrated until you cross the finish line.

Hydrate during training and exercising

Make sure you are drinking enough fluids each day by monitoring your urine volume and color. Throughout the day, you should urinate every two to four hours and the color should be light yellow, like pale lemonade. If your urine is dark, increase your water and fluid intake. Note that vitamins make darken your urine, so monitor the quantity.

Dehydration is also increased due to sweat loss during exercise. Weigh yourself before and after each hard workout. Every pound lost represents one pound of sweat. Drink 16 ounces of fluid for each pound lost through sweat.

Fluids before, during, and after endurance exercise

Make sure you are well hydrated before the event. On the day before, drink extra water. On event day, drink at least 16 ounces of fluids up to two hours prior to the start. This will allow adequate time for you to empty your bladder before the event starts. About 10 minutes before the start, drink another 8-16 ounces of water or sports drink.

During the event, drink 8 to 10 ounces of water or sports drinks every 20 minutes. Drink your fluids early, *before* you get thirsty. You will have lost 1% of your body weight by the time your brain signals thirst.

After the event, you should drink to satisfy your thirst and then drink some more. If you haven't urinated for several hours you may be dehydrated, so keep drinking and monitor urine output.

Sports Drinks

Athletes who train or participate in events lasting more than 60 to 90 minutes perform better with sports drink than with water. Sports drinks provide small amounts of carbohydrates to fuel the muscles, sodium to enhance water retention and absorption, and water to replace sweat losses. Look for a drink that offers 50 to 80 calories per 8 ounces. Never test a new drink during race day, always experiment during training runs.

If you prefer to pass on sports drinks, an alternative way to consume adequate water and carbohydrate is to drink regular water plus consume an energy gels or gummy/fruit chew (Clif Shot Bloks, Sharkies).

Alison Ozgur, R.D.

To learn more about your nutritional needs and questions, purchase a 30 minute phone consultation with Alison from **GetFitLiveFit.org**.