

Hydration Needs for Competition

This handout provides helpful guidelines to ensure adequate hydration for optimal performance and recovery for daily trainings and competitions. For a more personalized regimen, we recommend contacting a certified sports dietitian who can assist you with a personalized plan that considers thirst, urine color, and weight changes under varying conditions of exercise. To find a Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) in your area, click below and search by expertise > sports nutrition > and enter your zip code: <https://www.eatright.org/find-an-expert>.

Goals for Training:

- Begin exercise well hydrated by drinking fluids throughout the day and within the hour before each exercise session
- Replace sweat losses by drinking fluids regularly during exercise
- Rehydrate after exercise to replace sweat lost during exercise
- Follow a personalized plan to help prevent dehydration. Losing > 2% of your body weight is harmful and can lead to early fatigue, cardiovascular stress, increased risk of heat illness, and decreased performance

Goals for Competition:

- Delay fatigue and maintain mental acuity
- Optimize ability to regulate body heat, especially in warm environments
- Satisfy thirst and prevent significant weight loss from sweating
- Improve ability to recover quickly from training and competition

Individual Training Recommendations:

- For short duration (low-moderate intensity) physical activity (< 60 min.), water is the best choice to drink before, during, and after exercise
- Sports drinks that contain 6-8% carbohydrates are good options for moderate to high intensity activity lasting > 60 minutes. During prolonged physical activity, it is important to replace carbohydrates and electrolytes
- For those who experience high sodium losses during exercise, consume salty foods during a pre-exercise meal or add salt to sports drinks consumed during exercise
- Rehydrate following exercise by drinking enough fluid (water or sports drink) to replace sweat lost during exercise. Replace fluid and sodium losses with fluids that contain salt such as soup or vegetable juice. Replace fluid and potassium losses by consuming fruits and vegetables

Keep in Mind:

- Begin exercise well-hydrated since most athletes find it challenging to match fluid intake to sweat loss while exercising
- Prevent under or over consumption of fluids while training longer than 60 minutes by following an individualized hydration plan based on fluid loss calculations
- If training is intense or involves intervals, consume carbohydrate in the form of sports drinks or snacks
- For events lasting longer than an hour (tournaments or multiple games on the same day), enhance hydration by selecting snacks and meals that contain sodium

Key Points for Training:

- Replace fluids early and often during and after exercise, particularly in warm environments
- Good sources of fluid include water, sports drinks, juices, soups, smoothies, fruits and vegetables

Key Points for Performance:

- Monitor urine color prior to training to ensure good hydration status. Clear to pale yellow colored urine is optimal
- Experiment during training (to identify amount of fluid needed), that allows you to perform at your best comfortably

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