

Hydration Needs for Exercise

These guidelines will help you to better understand adequate hydration needs during an exercise program. 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:

- 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 loss 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.

Specifics:

- 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

Key Points:

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