



Hydration



Why is it so important to stay properly hydrated?

Whether you're a serious athlete or recreational exerciser, it's important to make sure you get the right amount of water before, during and after exercising. Water regulates your body temperature, lubricates joints and helps transport nutrients for energy and health. If you're not properly hydrated, your body will be unable to perform at its highest level, and you may experience fatigue, muscle cramps, dizziness or more serious symptoms.

How much water should I be drinking?

There are no set guidelines for water intake while exercising because everyone is different. Sweat rate, heat, humidity, exercise intensity and duration are some of the factors that must be considered. A simple way to make sure you're staying properly hydrated is to check your urine. If your urine is consistently colorless or light yellow, you are most likely well hydrated. Dark yellow or amber-colored urine is a sign of dehydration.

The American Council on Fitness has suggested the following basic water intake guidelines for people doing moderate to high intensity exercise:

- Drink 17-20 ounces of water 2-3 hours before you start exercising
- Drink 8 ounces of water 20-30 minutes before you start exercising
- Drink 7-10 ounces of water every 10-20 minutes during exercise
- Drink 8 ounces of water no more than 30 minutes after you exercise

What about sports drinks?

While you are exercising, water is the best drink for most people, most of the time. However, if you are exercising at a high intensity for more than an hour, you may want to choose a sports drink. The calories, potassium and other nutrients in sports drinks can help provide energy and electrolytes to help you perform for a longer period of time. Choose sports drinks wisely, as they are often high in calories, sugar and sodium. Also check the serving size – one bottle may contain several servings. If you drink the entire bottle, you may need to double or even triple the amounts given on the Nutrition Facts Label. Some sports drinks contain caffeine. If you use a sports drink that contains caffeine, be careful not to get too much caffeine in your diet.