HEALTHY CHOICES

FACT SHEET: HYDRATION FOR SPORTS PERFORMANCE

It is well known that good hydration practices are good for our health. But something that is often overlooked is the *performance benefits* associated with an appropriately structured hydration plan.

Water makes up over 70% of our body. Avoiding dehydration during exercise is crucial to allow muscle contraction, maintain adequate brain function, regulate our blood volume and body temperature.

Sweating during exercise this leads to fluid loss. We can measure fluid losses by changes in body weight before and after exercise. A fluid loss in excess of 2% body mass (e.g. a 1.5kg weight loss for a 75kg individual) begins to increase the perception of how hard exercise feels, reduces endurance capacity, and negatively impacts on decision making and skill execution.

The good news is that if we make fluid replacement a key priority during training and competition we can prevent these negative effects.

Fast Facts

Sports drinks should be reserved for prolonged, high intensity exercise to assist fluid, fuel and electrolyte delivery.

Your muscles are 75% water. If they are not hydrated, they won't work properly.

An Accredited Sports Dietitian can provide individualised advice to ensure safe and appropriate use.

Water is the best fluid choice for sporting performance during low intensity and short duration sports.

Recommendations

1. Drink regularly throughout the day by including water with all meals and snacks to ensure you arrive to training/competition well hydrated
2. Drink small amounts of water regularly during exercise to avoid dehydration
3. Consume water with foods containing carbohydrate and protein after exercise to assist in rehydration and recovery.

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WATER VS. OTHER BEVERAGES

SUGAR COMPARISON

Beverage	Serve Size	Sugar (grams per serve)	Teaspoons of Sugar (per serve)
Water	600ml	0g	1 tsp
Soft Drink	600ml	64g	16 tsp
Energy Drink with caffeine + guarana, etc	600ml	64g	16 tsp
Sport Drink	600ml	36g	9 tsp
Juice	600ml	50g	12.5 tsp

Excessive intake of sugary beverages can be detrimental to our health. Switching to water can drastically decrease sugar intake as shown above.

EXAMPLE OF EXCESS SUGAR CONSUMPTION AROUND EXERCISE

Beverage Consumption	Serve Size	Sugar (grams per serve)	Kilojoules (kJ)
Before Exercise			
Energy Drink	500ml	51g	950kJ
During Exercise (1 hour)			
Sport Drink	600ml	36g	620kJ
After Exercise			
Soft Drink	600ml	64g	1080Kj
Total		**151g**	**2650kJ**

Notes: Around 2650 kilojoules and 38 teaspoons of sugar consumed! Kilojoule consumption is possibly greater than the energy expended by someone doing moderate level recreational activity for 1 hour.

The carbohydrate (sugar) content of soft drinks, energy drinks and juice is too high to be effective for use in sport. This high concentration slows the emptying time from the gut and can lead to gastrointestinal discomfort.

Sports drinks are formulated to provide fuel and replenish fluid and electrolyte levels. Unfortunately these are often misused. For example, for most people undertaking recreational sport, those doing short duration, low level activity, and spectators do not need a sports drink – opt for water instead!