

Fluid Facts: How to Stay Hydrated

Fluid replacement is critical during hot summer days. Often we wait until we feel thirsty to replenish fluids in the body. The feeling of thirst is a sign that your body is already behind the curve and has crossed over into a state of dehydration. While people can survive for about a month without food, they can only survive a few days without water. People involved in physical activity need extra fluids to replace body water lost while practicing, competing and even walking.

Functions of water. One of the most important functions of water is to cool the body. As a person exercises, muscles generate heat, which raises the body's temperature. As the sweat produced evaporates, the body is cooled. If you do not replace this sweat by drinking more fluids, the body's water balance will be upset and may overheat.

Environment and fluid loss. Hot and humid temperatures cause a person to lose more water through sweat. Increase fluid intake when exercising in higher temperatures to replace fluids lost and cool the body's internal temperature.

Hydration guidelines. It is important to drink water before, during and after exercise. Dehydration can start when a person loses as little as 1% of body weight. Follow these guidelines to make sure you're getting enough water:

- **Before exercise:** drink 2 cups of cold water 1 to 2 hours before your activity. Cold fluids at a temperature of 40-50° work best.
- **During exercise:** drink ½ cup of cold water every 15 minutes. It is best if each person has their own water bottle to prevent the spread of germs and to monitor the amount of water ingested during the activity.
- **After exercise:** drink 2 cups of cold water for every pound of weight lost. The goal is to rehydrate the body back to the pre-exercise weight within 24 hours of a major physical workout. The difficulty with staying hydrated is if you consume the same amount of fluid that is lost in sweat, the result is feeling bloated.

Sources of Hydration:

Water. Plain cold water is the best and most economical source of fluid. The body absorbs cold fluids faster than warmer ones, and drinking water is the easiest way to replace body fluids.

Sports drinks. Athletes can use sports drinks, especially during activities lasting more than 90 minutes. These drinks should contain no more than 15 to 18 grams of carbohydrates per cup. Make your own sport drink and save money by using this recipe: 4 tbsp. sugar, ¼ tsp salt, ¼ cup boiling water, ¼ cup orange juice or 2 tbsp lemon juice and ¾ cup water. Dissolve sugar and salt in hot water, add juice and cold water. Chill. Yield: 1 quart. *Source: Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook, 2nd ed.*

Diluted fruit juice. Use it as a fluid replacement if it is diluted at least twofold: 1 cup water for every 1 cup of juice.

Foods with water. Drink water along with foods such as oranges, watermelon, apples, grapes, lettuce, and tomatoes. These foods provide water and carbohydrates and are good for replacing lost water and energy after exercise.

Not recommended. Carbonated beverages, high-sugar drinks and undiluted fruit juice are too high in carbohydrates and may cause stomach cramps, nausea and diarrhea. Caffeinated beverages, such as tea, coffee and cola beverages will dehydrate the body even more. Increasingly popular "energy drinks" contain large doses of caffeine, as well as other additives that may be dangerous during exercise.

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