

Ride the Wave – Fluids for Active People

There is a lot of information out there about what you should be drinking as a physically active person. Sports drinks, vitamin waters, tap water, dehydration and over hydration, there is a lot to consider! Take a look at these questions and answers to determine if you are on the right track when it comes to hydration.

What should I be drinking?

Usually water is your best choice. Most recreationally active people don't need sports drinks, vitamin water or any of the other specialty drinks that line store shelves! If you find water boring, try adding lemon, orange or lime wedges, cucumber slices or even low calorie flavourings or drink sparkling water. Sports drinks are most useful for athletes who exercise for more than an hour at high intensity like marathon runners and long distance cyclists, who need the extra carbohydrate found in these drinks to keep them going. Remember sports drinks are just sugar, water and flavouring. They have little nutritional value and contain calories that most people don't need – between 30 and 250 calories per bottle.

When should I be drinking?

Bottom line is - drink when you start to get thirsty. Before physical activity, drink water leading up to the workout. Slow and steady drinking best. Drinking several big glasses of water all at once can leave you feeling water-logged and the water probably won't be absorbed well. During physical activity, you should consider how hard you are exercising, how long you are exercising and the temperature of where you are exercising. At high intensity, high heat and long duration, individuals may need to drink over a litre of water per hour. At lower intensity, temperature or duration, drinking small amounts steadily over your workout is probably best. After your activity, keep drinking as you are thirsty. A tall cool glass of ice water will probably look good to you at this point!

How can I tell if I have had too much/too little to drink?

There are a few ways to tell if you are drinking enough. Your first indicator is that you feel thirsty. If you do, you probably need to have something to drink. Another way to tell is to look your urine. Dark yellow urine usually means dehydration. Also, infrequent urination can mean dehydration. If you are urinating very often and your urine is clear, you may not need to drink so much. You can also monitor weight change – weight lost during exercise is water lost. Every 1lb lost can be replaced with 2-3 cups of water.

Who needs to be concerned with hydration?

Most adults are pretty good at keeping themselves at the proper level of hydration and can easily correct any problems. Kids and the elderly may need a little extra encouragement to drink the right amount. Kids may forget to drink or not want to stop what they are doing long enough to drink. Providing easily accessible drinks that are appealing to children is a good idea, especially in warm weather. 100% fruit juice, water,

ice pops and milk are great options to have available to active kids. The elderly are another group of concern. Older people have a reduced thirst mechanism. They may not feel thirsty even if they are dehydrated. Some older people struggle with incontinence or urgency and may avoid drinking in fear they may not be able to get to a bathroom when they need it. Offering favourite beverages to older people and making bathrooms easily accessible should help them meet their hydration needs.

Are there any risks with improper hydration?

As with most things in life, too much or too little isn't good. Same goes with hydration. Drinking too little water can be hazardous to health. The kidneys filter the blood to remove waste products and the waste leaves in urine. The more concentrated the urine is (i.e.: more dark yellow) the more difficult it is for the kidneys to process. Drinking too little can make physical activity more difficult as thicker blood moves slowly around the body. Also, the body can get overheated quickly if there is no water available to sweat out. Drinking too much water is also hazardous. Drinking excessive water will dilute the blood and can be very dangerous. Individuals have been sent to hospital and even died as a result of excessive water intake. Listen to your body and your thirst and you won't have to worry about drinking to excess.

Do I really need 8 glasses of water each day?

For years, we have been told to drink 8 glasses of water a day. New research is saying that this rule may not be strict as we once thought. There is water in our food and it counts toward fluid intake. For example, a slice of white bread is 30% water. Water from coffee, tea and caffeinated beverages counts as fluid intake too. Excessive caffeine can make you urinate more and dehydrate you, but the amount of caffeine you would need to take in would be more than a couple of cups of coffee. If you aren't thirsty and your urine is a nice light yellow (lemonade color), but you aren't drinking 8 glasses each day, don't be too concerned. Fluids intake is an individual thing, so trust your instincts!

Here is an example of a refreshing summer drink for active people:

Grape Juice Sangria

1 C grape juice
½ C orange juice
3 C sparkling water
1 orange, cut into wedges
Ice cubes

In a jug or punch bowl, combine all ingredients. Add ice and serve!

Nutrition Information (1/4 of recipe):

Calories: 68	Fibre: 0.7g
Fat: 0.1g	Protein: 0.9g
Sodium: 4mg	Calcium: 46mg
Carbohydrate: 16.7g	Iron: 0.2mg

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