

## Sports Nutrition: Water - Hydration - & Athletic Performance

Every athlete has a different hydration requirement, which changes due to weather conditions. Generally, it is recommended that everyone drink 64 ounces of water a day to stay in a fully hydrated state. Sweating, which often occurs during physical activity, releases water and sodium from the body. To function at their peak, athletes need to replenish this loss through water and sports drinks. Neglecting to replace both fluid and sodium loss results in dehydration, which causes impaired mental focus, impaired energy metabolism, and an imbalance in electrolyte levels. It also results in rapid fatigue and decreased energy. As a general rule, athletes should drink 16 ounces of water or sports drink 2 hours before activity. They should then consume another 8 ounces 30 minutes before activity. During an activity, fluids should be readily available for athletes as they need it. Coaches should watch for athletes expelling a higher-than-normal amount of sweat and ensure that the athlete is drinking as much as they need. It is recommended that athletes replenish half of the fluid lost by sweat. Athletes involved in short-term activity lasting over 30 seconds are at a high risk for dehydration due to the intensity of the activity. These athletes should drink the recommended fluids before their activity and replenish the lost fluids as soon after finishing as possible. Short-term activity lasting less than 30 seconds has little effect on dehydration and does not pose a hazard. Athletes involved in long-term activity, such as running, cycling, and skiing for more than 30 minutes need periodic fluid intake to reduce dehydration levels, even though this may cause cramping and gastrointestinal problems. To prevent such problems, athletes should train themselves to take in the necessary liquid to accustom their bodies to the fluid. During an activity, athletes should drink 8 ounces of fluid every 20 minutes. For activities over 40 minutes, water is not sufficient, because it does not provide the necessary sodium intake to maintain electrolyte levels. If water is all that is available, mixing 1 teaspoon of salt per liter of water is enough to maintain the balance. Too much water can cause another problem, hyponatremia, when the sodium levels in the body are too low. Symptoms of hyponatremia are nausea, muscle cramps, disorientation, slurred speech, confusion, and inappropriate behavior. This occurs when there is an intake of water to replace lost fluids, but no intake of salt to replace lost sodium. Hyponatremia is much more dangerous than dehydration, and it is important that coaches monitor how much fluids are taken in to ensure that their athletes do not run the risk of suffering from this potentially life-threatening disease. The old method of "drink as much as you can" is now seen as dangerous because of the effects it can have in lowering sodium levels. If your athletes are still unclear as to how much fluid to drink, there is a simple urine test that determines the hydration levels of a person. Athletes should have clear urine, showing that they are fully hydrated. If the urine is dark or there is restricted flow, the athlete needs more fluids. There is not a set amount for each person, so it is important that as a coach, you train your athletes to learn what their individual bodies need.

### About the Author

This section contains practical advice about making healthier and safer food choices. Remember that to have a healthy diet, most people.

Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>