

Hydrating To Improve Your Performance - Do It Right!

Water. It is 60% of your body weight. It is the most important part of an athletes intake. It is more important than electrolytes, calories or vitamins. Without water your body will shut down. And with too much water you can do significant damage. Water assists the body in the transportation of nutrients and the cooling system. So, what can you do to stay hydrated during your exercise and recognize the symptoms when you haven't? Before any exercise you should always drink between 16-24 oz of fluid. Caffeine drinks will dehydrate you even faster than drinking nothing so stick with water or sports drinks. Drink early. If the weather is hot or humid you should also drink 16 oz about 45 minutes before you intend to work out. Keep fluid with you that is convenient to drink. Don't assume that because you are in the house doing aerobics that you will stop to drink. Keep a water bottle close by. You will get distracted and keep working only to decrease your performance and lose valuable time building strength and endurance. Although you can't drink enough to totally replace your sweat loss you can drink too much. Too much of a good thing, water, will cause hyponatremia, cardiac distress and collapse. Unfortunately it results in fatal consequences. Watch out for signs of dehydration. They include dizziness, loss of energy, headaches, anxiety, rapid pulse or hot dry skin. Thirst begins at a 1% water loss; at 2% your performance is impaired; 5% you develop headache, irritability and a spaced out feeling; and at 7% you collapse unless the exercise stops. Carbohydrates are a popular snack food before strenuous exercise. Two specific reasons that they work so well is that they provide quick energy and they keep you hydrated by pulling water into your digestive tract. Other ways to cool your body down is to decrease the intensity of your exercise for a few minutes to allow the internal heat to dissipate. If you are cycling coast for a few minutes; if you are running slow to a jog when you drink; or if you are rowing to coast for a few minutes. External application of water on your skin using a wet rag or spray bottle will also help to cool your body down. Dehydration is a significant problem for athletes of all skill levels. Staying hydrated will improve your performance and decrease your probability of injury. Watch out for the signs of dehydration, keep fluids with you and use external applications of water as you can.

About the Author

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