

# HYDRATION: NOT JUST FOR EXERCISE

## WHY IS HYDRATION IMPORTANT?

Water makes up approximately 60 percent of your body weight. It is found in every cell, tissue and organ, making it essential to maintain your health. Water assists with many functions of the body including:



- Regulating body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure
- Lubricating joints
- Protecting your spinal cord and other sensitive tissues including your ears, nose and throat
- Transporting nutrients to cells
- Disposing of waste through urination, perspiration and bowel movements

The fluid you consume throughout the day replaces the water lost during everyday functions, including urinating, sweating and breathing. Inadequate fluid intake can lead to dehydration, a state in which your body does not have enough water to carry out its normal functions. One of the first symptoms of dehydration is thirst. Other symptoms include altered behavior, anxiety, confusion, faintness, inability to stand or walk, rapid breathing, loss of consciousness and a weak, rapid pulse. Even slight dehydration can decrease your energy level and make you tired.

## WHAT COUNTS?

Most of the water your body needs is obtained through the water and beverages you consume. Contrary to popular belief, all fluids, including coffee, contribute to your hydration status. However, water is the smart choice. Soda, fruit juices and other sugar-sweetened beverages provide empty calories that can lead to weight gain.

The food you eat can also contribute to your fluid needs. Foods with high fluid content include broth soups, watermelon, celery, tomatoes and oranges.

## HOW MUCH WATER DO I NEED?

The color of your urine first thing in the morning can indicate your hydration status. Appropriate hydration is indicated by light colored urine (the color of straw or lemonade), while dehydration is indicated by dark colored urine (the color of apple juice).

The Institute of Medicine recommends a daily fluid intake of 13 cups for men and 9 cups for women. These recommendations are for healthy individuals that live in a temperate climate zone.

Individual fluid needs are influenced by many factors. Your body uses more water to maintain normal body temperature; therefore, individuals that live in extreme climate zones, very hot or very cold, may require additional fluid to stay well hydrated. Those who engage in physical activity require additional fluids to replenish their water supply and prevent dehydration. An individual with a fever, diarrhea or vomiting has increased fluid needs. Certain medications and medical conditions including diabetes, heart disease and cystic fibrosis may influence hydration status. Individuals with certain health conditions, such as kidney disease, may be instructed to follow fluid restriction. Be sure to follow your health care professional's advice.

## HYDRATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Proper hydration before, during and after physical activity is essential to your performance and health. Dehydration can occur during any type of physical activity. As you engage in physical activity, your body temperature rises and sweat is produced to avoid overheating. Dehydration can result if the fluid lost through sweat is not replaced properly. Certain conditions result in increased sweat production and fluid loss. Be mindful of...

- Temperature: The higher the temperature, the more fluid you will lose through perspiration.
- Intensity: The harder you work, the more you sweat.
- Body size and gender: Larger individuals and men tend to sweat more than those with a smaller frame and females.
- Duration: The longer you work out, the more fluid you will lose through sweat.

During physical activity, the goal is to reduce the risk of dehydration, heat illness and injury while avoiding over-hydration. Hydration status can be monitored through changes in body weight. Step on the scale before and after physical activity. You should drink enough fluids to replace what you've lost from sweating during exercise. If you gain weight after physical activity, you may be drinking too many fluids. If you lose weight during physical activity, chances are you are not drinking enough.

Cool your body from the inside out by replacing fluids lost during physical activity. Water is an appropriate hydration choice for most physical activity. Sports drinks with electrolytes should be considered if you are engaging in moderate to vigorous physical activity that lasts 60 minutes or longer.

