

# Hydration Game Plan for Safety and Performance

## Can you play your best if you're dehydrated?

The short answer is no. Dehydrated athletes lose their performance edge. That's because dehydration can slow you down, prevent your body from cooling, and increase your risk of life-threatening heatstroke.

You only need to lose about 2% of your body weight in fluid to affect your performance, especially in the heat.<sup>1,2</sup> By the time you're thirsty, you're likely a bit dehydrated. Then it's definitely time to take a drink.

Fortunately, you can prevent dehydration by knowing the warning signs and having a game plan for replacing your fluid losses during exercise.

### Warning signs of dehydration

- intense thirst
- muscle cramps
- weakness
- headache
- nausea
- fatigue
- dizziness
- decreased performance



Ask Mia Hamm, Derek Jeter, or Peyton Manning and they'll tell you: These symptoms are also associated with more serious conditions like heat exhaustion and heatstroke that can take you out of the game altogether—and need immediate medical attention.

### KNOW YOUR SWEAT RATE

Staying properly hydrated is about maintaining your body's fluid balance. **Know how much you sweat and how much to drink to replace it.**

1. Weigh yourself before and after practices and games.

2. If you lose more than 2% of your body weight, drink a bit more fluid next session. (2% loss = 3 pounds for a 150-pound athlete.) Weight lost in one practice or game is water loss, NOT fat loss. Make sure you regain fluid losses before the next workout.
3. Weight gain means you drank too much and you should cut back next time.
4. Your goal is to finish exercise weighing within 2% of what you did when you started and to replace all of your fluid losses before the next workout.

### Check your urine as a sign of day-to-day hydration.

If it's pale like lemonade, that's a sign of good hydration. If it's dark like apple juice, you need more fluids.

Once you know how to best replace your sweat, you can create a hydration plan that includes drinking before, during, and after each workout or competition.

*continued*



**Drink before, during, and after workouts****• BEFORE**

Gives you a head start to help you compete at your best. A cup or 2 should help.

**• DURING**

Keeps you hydrated on the fly.

**• AFTER**

Helps you replace the fluids and electrolytes, or the minerals your body loses in sweat. After each workout, replace about 150% of your weight loss over 2 to 4 hours with fluids and eat energy-rich foods to replace your body water, body salts, and energy stores.

**KNOW YOUR BEVERAGE OPTIONS**

While water is fine, research shows a properly formulated sports drink can help when you're working out—especially for more than 45 minutes. That's because sports drinks have:

- **Flavor** to encourage you to drink.<sup>3</sup>
- **Carbohydrates** to give energy to working muscles.<sup>4</sup>
- **Electrolytes** (salt) to help replace what you lose in sweat.<sup>5,6,7</sup>

**SPEAK UP IF YOU FEEL ILL**

Suffering in silence when you feel the early signs of dehydration or exhaustion can be dangerous.

Instead, tell your coach, athletic trainer, or another adult how you're feeling and then get the rest, fluid, and medical attention you may need. Buddy up with a teammate and watch out for each other when it's hot and humid.

Finally, talk to your doctor if you have additional questions about proper hydration and nutrition. Your health and success may depend on it.

**Resources**

For more information on hydration and nutrition, visit [www.acsm.com](http://www.acsm.com) or [www.gssiweb.com](http://www.gssiweb.com).

**References**

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\* Athlete Tip Sheet may be reproduced.