

HYDRATION



Love 2 Run? Now the warmer weather is here, don't let dehydration affect your performance.

Water is an essential nutrient involved in many bodily processes and losses must be replaced daily to prevent a state of dehydration. Exercise increases the body's need for fluid, due to losses through sweat and metabolic processes, so hydration is something that any active individual should carefully consider.

Fluid losses from sweat vary depending on individual and environmental factors, but are high when exercising in hot and humid conditions and/or at high intensity. Severe dehydration is dangerous and can be life threatening, however fluid losses of as little as 2% of bodyweight can impair sports performance. Effects of dehydration include impaired ability to regulate body temperature, increased perception of effort, decreased mental function and decreased gastric emptying which can lead to gastrointestinal upset during your run. Adequate day-to-day hydration is important, and depending on the duration of a training session or race, fluid replacement during exercise may also be important.

How much fluid do you need?

There is not a one size fits all. Several factors affect how much fluid we need including:

- Genetics - some people just sweat more
- Size - larger people tend to sweat more
- Environment and exercise intensity - higher losses in hot and humid conditions and with increased intensity
- Fitness levels - fitter people tend to sweat early and in larger volumes.

Because fluid requirements are so individual it is important for runners to establish their fluid needs. A simple method for estimating sweat rate is to measure changes in body mass during a timed run, considering input (foods /fluids consumed) and output (sweat /urine produced) during the run. With this information, a sports dietitian can assist you with determining your fluid requirements during exercise, and recovery.

Fluid type

Water is great for general hydration and short, low intensity runs (around 60mins). For more intense sessions (longer than 45mins), moderate sessions of more than 60mins, or prolonged exercise in hot conditions, sports drinks or electrolyte replacement formulas are recommended as they provide fluid and important electrolytes. Electrolyte replacement

(especially sodium) is particularly important when running in the heat, or if you are a salty sweater (white residue on running gear). For longer runs sports drinks have the added benefit of providing carbohydrates. And yes you can drink too much. Overconsumption of water without sufficient electrolytes to balance this, particularly sodium, can contribute to a condition called hyponatremia (low blood sodium) which can be very dangerous.

Tips

Adequately hydrate daily– a good guide is to check that urine is pale yellow in colour

Start your run well-hydrated

Practice drinking when running – in hot conditions plan a route near water bubblers or carry fluids. Include sports drinks for intense or longer sessions

Hydrate post running – cool flavoured drinks promote better intake.

Have a fluid plan in place based on your fluid losses in different conditions (hot vs cooler weather, long runs vs shorter runs) and hydrate accordingly.

Running poses challenges such as drinking from cups on the move or being able to run with adequate fluid in your stomach and so a degree of dehydration may be inevitable. This is where your practised hydration plan comes into play so you can adequately hydrate after the race. In endurance events or in hot conditions stop to take on fluids. The couple of seconds taken at a water/aid stations could pay dividends later on. Being dehydrated can significantly affect performance.

Know your own fluid needs. Be sensible and don't drink large volumes of plain water in cooler conditions. Electrolyte replacement is very important and can be included in fluids with or without carbohydrate.

Don't leave your hydration to chance. A sports dietitian can assist you with calculating your individual fluid requirements for various training and racing conditions.

Liz Lovering, BHSc NutrDiet

Runner, Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD), Accredited Practising Nutritionist (APN), member of Sports Dietitians Australia (SDA), Level 1 Anthropometrist (ISAK), professional chef, Accredited Athletics Coach (Level 3, - Middle and Long Distance).



Book to see Liz for a dietary consult at the intraining Running Injury Clinic.

PH: 3367 3088