

# Athlete Tip Sheet:

## 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, impair skills and mental awareness, and increase your risk of heat illness such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

**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 already dehydrated. It's time to get some fluid into your body.

Fortunately, you can prevent dehydration by (1) having a game plan for replacing your fluid loss during exercise and (2) knowing the warning signs of dehydration if it does occur.



### Warning signs of significant dehydration

- ▶ Noticeable thirst
- ▶ Muscle cramps
- ▶ Weakness
- ▶ Decreased performance
- ▶ Difficulty paying attention
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Lightheaded feeling or dizziness

These symptoms can also be associated with more serious conditions like heat exhaustion and heat stroke that can take you out of the game altogether. They require immediate medical attention.

### Know your sweat rate

Staying properly hydrated is about maintaining your body's fluid balance – **matching fluid OUT (sweating) with fluid IN (drinking). Know how much you sweat and how much to drink to replace it to help prevent dehydration and avoid drinking too much.**

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 the next session. (2% loss = 3 lbs for 150-lb athlete, 4 lbs for a 200-lb athlete, etc.) Weight lost in practices or games is water loss, NOT fat loss. Make sure you fully regain fluid losses before the next workout.
3. You should never gain weight from fluids during exercise. If you drank too much, cut back a little 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 practice.

### 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.



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

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Once you know how to best replace your sweat, you can create a solid hydration plan.

### Drink before, during and after workouts

Drink **BEFORE** to help you compete at your best. Drink 1-2 cups 2-3 hours before activity.

Drink every 15-20 minutes to stay hydrated **DURING** your game or practice.

Drinking **AFTER** will help 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 2-4 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 that a properly formulated sports drink can help even more when you're working out – especially for intense workouts and any workout lasting more than 45 minutes. That's because sports drinks have:

**Flavor** to encourage you to drink. (Water alone turns off thirst too soon.)<sup>3</sup>

**Carbohydrates** that fuel working muscles for staying power.<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 – **YOU CAN'T WORK THROUGH DEHYDRATION OR "TOUGH IT OUT!"** Then get the rest, fluid and any medical attention you may need. Buddy up with a teammate and watch out for each other when it's hot and humid. If your buddy starts acting "spacey," think dehydration and notify an adult.

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

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

#### References

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