

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®



Healthy Hydration

Water Basics

WATER IS ONE OF THE MOST essential components of the human body, yet many people do not understand the importance of a well-hydrated body nor how much water is lost during the day. Water regulates the body's temperature, cushions and protects vital organs, and aids the digestive system. And, because water composes more than half of the human body, it is impossible to sustain life for more than a week without it.

Water Loss

Necessary to the healthy function of all internal organs, water must be consumed to replace the amount lost each day during basic activities. Water not only composes 75 percent of all muscle tissue and 25 percent of fatty tissue, it also acts within each cell to transport nutrients and dispel waste.

Water also regulates the body's temperature, allowing heat to evaporate from the body in the form of sweat. In one hour of exercise the body can lose more than a quart of water, depending on exercise intensity and air temperature. If there is not enough water for the body to cool itself through perspiration, the body enters a state of dehydration.

Dehydration

In a dehydrated state the body is unable to cool itself, leading to heat exhaustion and possibly heat stroke. Without an adequate supply of water the body will lack energy and muscles may develop cramps.

For regular exercisers maintaining a constant supply of water in the body is essential to performance. Dehydration leads to muscle fatigue and loss of

coordination. Even small amounts of water loss may hinder athletic performance. To prevent dehydration, exercisers must drink before, during and after the workout.

Fluid Balance and Replenishment

It is important to drink even before signs of thirst appear. Thirst is a signal that your body is already on the way to dehydration. It is important to drink more than thirst demands and to continue to drink throughout the day. One way to check your hydration level is to check the color of your urine. The color should be light to clear unless you are taking supplements, which will darken the color for several hours after consumption.

Water is the best fluid replenisher for all individuals, although sports drinks may replace lost electrolytes after high-intensity exercise exceeding 45 to 90 minutes. And remember — not all fluid has to come from pure

water. Other choices include fruits, juices, soups and vegetables. It is easy to prevent dehydration with pure, healthy, refreshing water, so drink up!

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Hydration Hints

- Drink one to two cups of fluid at least one hour before the start of exercise.
- Drink eight ounces of fluid 20 to 30 minutes prior to exercising.
- Drink four to eight ounces of fluid every 10 to 15 minutes or so during exercise.
- Drink an additional eight ounces of fluid within 30 minutes after exercising.
- Drink two cups of fluid for every pound of body weight lost after exercise.
- Both caffeine and alcohol can have a diuretic effect, so be sure to compensate for this additional water loss.

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