

GOOD HYDRATION

by Thad McLaurin

We all know that water is essential to being healthy, yet many of us are under-hydrated.

Experts used to recommend drinking (8) 8 oz glasses of water a day. However, people have different hydration needs. Some individuals sweat more heavily than others. So, a more recent recommendation is to drink water throughout the day. When you void (pee) check the color. If it's translucent, then you're well hydrated. If the urine is opaque, dark, and/or cloudy, then you're not well hydrated.

Staying Hydrated

Just like anything, if you make drinking water a part of your routine, you're more likely to do it. Try keeping a large bottle of water on your desk or work area so that it's always in sight. Then drink from the bottle throughout the day. Many sports watches have hydration alarms that you can set that will go off every so many minutes/ hours reminding you to drink.

Why It Matters

Dehydration can cause severe health problems.

Early Signs of Dehydration include:

- Sensation of Being Light-Headed
- Dark Urine with Strong Odor
- Dry Mouth or Cough
- Heat Intolerance
- Appetite Loss
- Flushed Skin
- Headache
- Fatigue



Sounds odd, but many say they don't like the taste of water. If that's the case, chilled or iced water is often better tolerated. There are also flavored waters out there, but be careful not to select flavored waters that contain a lot of extra sugars from fruit juice or artificial sweeteners. Sparkling water is fine and may help those transitioning away from sodas. However use discretion in selecting sparkling water, they are not all alike. Tonic water often contains added sodium and sugar and club soda may also contain added sodium. Check the nutrition labels before purchasing.

When working out, walking or running for less than an hour, water is your best friend. For periods longer than an hour, you may need a drink with added electrolytes. All sports drinks, however, are not alike.

Most sports drinks contain small amounts of sodium. It sounds counter intuitive to have salt in a hydration drink, but sodium is an electrolyte that actually helps the body absorb water and carry it throughout the body. If you sweat long enough, you can deplete your sodium stores. Even if you're drinking lots of water, you can become dehydrated if your sodium levels are low. Do you ever get that sloshy feeling in your stomach after drinking water on a run? That could mean that your sodium levels are low and even though you have been drinking water, your body has no means of getting it out of the stomach to hydrate the rest of you.

Like sodium, potassium levels (another electrolyte) can decrease through sweat loss after an hour of running. Calcium is an electrolyte that helps muscles contract and potassium works to relax the muscle. Muscle cramps can sometimes occur later in a long run when potassium levels become depleted. Sports drinks contain potassium and are a great way to keep your potassium levels topped off.



Know Your Sports Drinks

Navigating your way through all the sports drink varieties to find the one that meets your needs is the next obstacle to clear. Today there are many more brands than Gatorade and even Gatorade has numerous varieties. Basically there are three types of sports drinks, each designed for a different purpose— Isotonic, Hypotonic, and Hypertonic.

Isotonic Sports Drinks

This is the most common sports drink. It's designed to be drunk both before and during exercise. The formula consists of similar concentrations of salt and other electrolytes and sugar (6-8% carbs) as in the human body. Isotonic sports drinks usually contain about 120-170 calories per 500ml of fluid. Probably the most common type of sports drink, isotonic sports drinks are good for normal replacement of fluids lost through normal sweating incurred during middle and long distance runs. Branding plays an important part with sports drinks companies. In Australia, Powerade now has "Powerade Isotonic" drink playing off "isotonic" like it's something new, but it's the same as the regular Powerade here in the states. (Examples: Gatorade [original]; Gatorade G Series; Gatorade Endurance Formula, Powerade [original], 100% coconut water, etc.).

Hypotonic Sports Drinks

This type of sports drink contains a lower concentration of salt and other electrolytes and sugar (carbs) than the human body. This type of drink replaces fluids but doesn't provide much of an energy boost. The hypotonic sports drink is a good option for a runner whose stomach won't tolerate the Isotonic or Hypertonic sports drink.

But...if a runner uses hypotonic sports drinks on a long run, he/she will need to supplement with sports gels or some other carb food source to get in the needed carbs. Salty pretzels are a great option because the carbs are easily digestible and the salt will help ensure proper hydration/water balance. (Examples: Gatorade G2, Powerade Zero)

Hypertonic Sports Drinks

This type of sports drink contains a higher concentration of salt and sugar than the human body. They contain about 10-15% carbs and usually about 240-320 calories per 500ml of fluid. These drinks are designed to replenish carb levels after exercise or to top off the glycogen stores before an endurance run. Hypertonic drinks are good for marathons or ultra runs. Due to the high levels of carbs, hypertonic sports drinks are not well suited for use during exercise. They absorb slowly and may cause cramping or bloating. (Examples: Gatorade Endurance Formula, Powerade Energy)

"Enhanced" Water

There's a 4th category— "enhanced water." Often these waters are labeled "enhanced with electrolytes." But, if you read the nutrition label, there is no sodium or potassium. The electrolytes added are to enhance flavor. So, often it's water that is better suited to keeping you hydrated (just like tap water) for runs less than 60 minutes. (Examples: Vitamin Water, Smart Water; Aquifina Essentials, SoBe LifeWater, Dasani Plus, etc.)



Thad McLaurin, aka RunnerDude

Thad McLaurin is a running coach and personal trainer who has helped hundreds of clients discover a love of running and fitness. A runner for over 30 years, Thad has run 15 marathons, 1 ultra marathon, dozens of half marathons, and too many 5K and 10K races to count. His credentials include: Personal Trainer certification from ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine), Personal Trainer and Nutrition Consultant diploma certifications from NPTI (National Personal Trainer Institute), RRCA Running Coach certification, and USA Track & Field Level 1 Coaching certification, in addition to a Bachelor's degree in Education from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Thad is founder of RunnerDude's Fitness, a popular running-focused training center in Greensboro, North Carolina, author of RunnerDude's Blog, one of the top-ranked running blogs in the country, and has authored the book *Full Body Fitness for Runners* (a USA Best Book Awards Finalist). Thad is a contributing writer for Active.com and has written articles for AmateurEndurance.com, Fitter U Fitness, and Canada's IMPACT Magazine in addition to being featured in the "Ask the Experts" section of Runner's World.

CUCUMBER LEMONADE

- 1 cucumber, thinly sliced
- 3-4 fresh lemons, halved and seeded
- 1/4 - 1 cup sugar, to taste
- 2 quarts water

Squeeze the lemon juice from the 3-4 lemons into a large pitcher, add the sliced cucumber and 2 quarts water. Add sugar to taste. Delicious, refreshing and super hydrating after a long run or long day at the beach!

WATERMELON SALSA

- 4 cups diced watermelon
- 1/2 cup diced red onion
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro
- 1/2 cup fresh mint
- Juice of one lemon or lime
- Jalapeño optional

Gently mix all ingredients together and serve immediately as side salad or with your favorite protein (chicken, pork, even tofu!). Refrigerate up to 2 days. Did you know that watermelon is 90% water - a perfect hydrating food!

EASY SUMMER GAZPACHO

- 1 onion
- 1 cucumber
- 2 green, red or yellow peppers
- 3-4 stalks of celery
- 3-4 fresh peeled tomatoes (or 2 cans peeled whole tomatoes)
- 3/4 cup tomato juice (any variety)
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Finely dice all vegetables. Add all ingredients to a food processor or blender. Blend until smooth. Refrigerate up to 2 hours. Serve cold or warm. Vegetables are a great way to hydrate, and add variety to your meal plan. Add your favorite garden, farmers market or grocery store vegetable to this recipe... all are delicious, packed with nutrition and super hydrating!

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

- 1 angel food cake (homemade or pre-made)
- 1 quart fresh strawberries
- 1 can whipped cream (any variety)
- Ice cream, frozen yogurt, ice milk
- any frozen dessert variety

In a bowl, layer slices of angel food cake, smother with strawberries, top with 1 scoop ice cream and dollop of whip cream. A refreshing way to "eat" your fluids on those hot August days!