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Hydration tips for summer sports

By Dev K. Mishra, M.D.

In a previous [Youth Soccer Insider](#) we discussed recognizing signs of [heat illness](#). Now we will discuss an even more important strategy -- preventing dehydration and possible heat illness through a good hydration strategy.

Start your summer sports activity by being properly hydrated.

One of the most important points is that the young athlete should start an exercise activity while well hydrated. The amount of fluid an athlete needs depends on the intensity and duration of the activity as well as weather conditions and the types of clothing and equipment worn.

In general, high school athletes require 10 to 12 cups of fluid (water, fruit juice, milk, etc.) per day consumed at meals and snacks so they start exercise properly hydrated. During exercise, athletes generally require 4 to 8 ounces of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes.

Here's an easy way to tell if you're hydrated: check the color of your urine. If it's less than 2 hours before training for competition and you notice that your urine is dark in color, you are not properly hydrated and you should drink more fluids.

Tips to Prevent Dehydration and Heat Illness:

- * Sports drinks are an excellent choice for hydration. Athletes can usually find a flavor they like, and the electrolytes (like sodium chloride) will stimulate thirst, help the body hold onto fluid, reduce the chance of cramping, and possibly improve performance.

- * Water is fine too, for events lasting up to about two hours.

- * Avoid any drinks with caffeine or high fructose corn syrup, and no carbonated sodas. "Energy drinks" such as Red Bull contain caffeine and should be avoided.

- * I like low-fat chocolate milk as another after-game alternative.

- * The athlete should have 12-16 ounces of fluid up until about 30 minutes before the game or practice (remember that most sports drinks come in 20 ounce bottles)

- * Keep sipping sports drinks or water during the practice or match, about 4 ounces at a time at the end of periods or halftime.

- * Start re-hydrating within 20 minutes of the conclusion of the match. Research shows that the first 20 minutes are the most efficient time to start refueling. Try to take in 20 ounces; no need to guzzle this down, but once you start drinking try to finish the bottle over the next several minutes.

Read "Heat Illness: How to recognize it in young athletes" [HERE](#).

(Dr. [Dev K. Mishra](#) is the creator of the [SidelineSportsDoc.com](#) injury management program for coaches. He is an orthopedic surgeon in private practice in Burlingame, Calif. He is a member of the team physician pool with the U.S. Soccer Federation and has served as team physician at the University of California, Berkeley. This article first appeared on [SidelineSportsDoc.com](#).)

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