

Hydration in exercise and sport

Proper hydration is essential to achieve training and performance potential.

The choice and amount of fluids consumed during training or during an event will depend on a number of factors including exercise intensity, length of the event, climatic conditions and an individual's sweat rate.

During medium intensity exercise in cool to warm environments lasting less than 60 minutes, water alone is usually adequate to maintain hydration levels. As the duration and intensity of the exercise increases beyond 60 minutes, carbohydrate in the form of solids or liquids with some sodium becomes important. An average of 500-600ml of fluid per hour is the average adequate fluid intake required to remain hydrated during exercise.

Dehydration beyond 2% body weight can adversely affect performance especially during long distance endurance events in the heat. Dehydration not only affects physiological performance but can affect skill, judgement, reaction, coordination and concentration.

Hydration Tips

- Begin an exercise session or event well hydrated.
- Drink to thirst during training and races. – Approximately 500-600ml per hour
- Consume cool palatable beverages that provide carbohydrates and electrolytes for training sessions and races lasting longer than 60 – 90 minutes.
- Consume 1.2-1.5l of fluid with electrolytes during recovery for every 1l of fluid lost during the exercise session or race.
- A guide to hydration levels is a simple urine test: Aim for a urine colour that looks like lemonade, if urine begins to look like apple juice- begin drinking!!!
- A more specific and a very accurate method of testing hydration levels is testing urine specific gravity using a refractometer.