

Fluid: The Optimum Fuel



We've all heard about the significance of water and fluids, sometimes more than we want to – but it seems that many of us still don't grasp their importance. Water, the most effective fluid for hydration, makes up 50-70% of our body's weight and is the ideal medium for chemical reactions to occur. In addition, it is essential in allowing our bodies to cool down. It is the nutrient without which, we would die the quickest. However, we are often confused and ask, "Are all fluids alike, or does only water count?" So what fluids are included?

Fluids

The following beverages can be included towards your body's daily needs:

- ✓ Water
- ✓ 100% fruit juice
- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Gatorade, Poweraid or other similar sports drinks*



What about tea, coffee and soda?

These drinks usually have caffeine in them, which causes a stimulant effect on the central nervous system and may increase frequency of urination. Although this effect has not been found to be significant, the main objective of drinking fluids is to hydrate, not promote fluid losses.

What about decaffeinated drinks?

Although decaffeinated beverages contain very little caffeine, and can count toward fluid intake, many contain artificial additives and are not as healthy as those recommended above. Therefore, if you are drinking decaffeinated drinks, drink them in addition to the other hydrating fluids, not in place of them.

*Fluids containing sodium (electrolytes) help to retain water longer. Therefore, sports drinks such as these are effective in helping hydration when exercising longer than 60 minutes

Recommended Amounts:

- ✓ 6-8, eight ounce glasses at rest
(8 ounces is the size of a yogurt container)



This amount does not take into consideration fluid lost during exercise or excessive sweating due to heat. Heavy exercisers, athletes in training and people who perspire heavily are often advised to have 10-12 glasses or more daily.

Cooling Down:

As mentioned earlier, water is essential to help the body cool down. However, it is water evaporation on the skin that maximizes the "cool down" effect. Therefore, be aware of conditions that will require the body to work harder to cool down and more likely require additional fluids.

- ✓ If you are engaged in activity where heavy clothing or protective gear must be worn that does not allow for evaporation, make sure to drink plenty of fluids.

- ✓ On hot, humid days, more water should be consumed. Because the water content of the air is high under these conditions, it is more difficult for evaporation to occur and one cannot rely on effective evaporation.

Be Aware of the Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration

Without proper fluid intake, dehydration can occur. These signs and symptoms can include:

- ✓ Thirst
- ✓ Lightheadedness or fatigue
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Inability to concentrate
- ✓ Feeling cold/having chills when it is hot out and you are sweating
- ✓ Collapse due to heat exhaustion or stroke



Another sign of hydration is the amount and color of urine. Larger amounts and lighter color urine indicate good hydration versus concentrated and dark in color. One should drink until the color becomes lighter.

Timing:

Whether we are talking about eating or drinking fluids, timing is everything. Basically, water empties out of the stomach as quickly as it comes in so it is important to drink often.

- ✓ Consuming small amounts every 30 minutes or so is ideal, even more often during exercise.
- ✓ It is better to drink very cold or room temperature water rather than warmer water.

However, the temperature issue is really more one of preference. If you are going to drink more water when it's cold, drink it cold. If you prefer it warmer, drink it warmer- whichever way you will get more. One issue with cold water is that it may cause stomach cramping for some people, so that they would be better off drinking it warmer.