

Drink Up! - Hydration for Players

GPA

During training and games, players naturally generate heat leading to a rise in body temperature. A rise in body temperature can be both detrimental to performance but also contribute to fatigue. Our bodies attempt to compensate for rising temperature by sweating.

When players do not consume enough fluids during training and games to compensate for these sweat losses, dehydration can quickly occur. As little as 2% of body weight has been shown to affect performance in a 13.5 stone player, 2% is as little as 3.75lbs. This may not sound much but in a single training session or game a player can easily lose up to 4% of their body weight.

Many players do not deal adequately with dehydration, and in fact never fully rehydrate after training or a game. This leads to players taking part in further training sessions already in a dehydrated state exposing themselves to a greater risk of injury.

When you are dehydrated, you will feel thirsty, however, thirst is not a good indication of needing to take fluids on board. By the time you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated. Some other symptoms of dehydration include:

There are a number of things that an individual player or the coach of a team can introduce to training and games that will provide a relatively accurate indication of a player's hydration status, and how much fluids need to be consumed to get back to normal hydration levels.

Establishing Hydration Status

Knowing how much fluids have been lost is important in rehydrating the body. There are a couple of easy ways of monitoring hydration levels. Known as the WUT method, these tests will provide a simple and accurate method of monitoring hydration status:

- Weigh players before and after training and games. Wearing as little clothing as possible €' the difference will be weight lost due to sweating.
- Use a urine Colour Chart to monitor the colour of your urine. Generally, the darker the urine, and the less you urinate, the more dehydrated you are.
- Thirst the absence of thirst does not mean that you are not dehydrated. However, if you are already thirsty then you are already dehydrated and need to drink.

Each player should complete a hydration table such as the one below:

Record of Body Weight, Urine Colour and Thirst						
Loss of >1% of Body Weight, Urine Colour of 4 - 8 or Persistent Thirst indicates possible Dehydration						
If any 2 or these occur, Dehydration is likely						
Date	Weight Yesterday Morning	Weight This Morning	Weight Change	Thirst?	Urine Colour	Comments

To complete the table, it is necessary to record your weight each morning. Monitor any change in body weight (that would not be explained by attempting to lose weight). If there is greater than a 1% change there may be a case of lost fluids.

If you are thirsty, it is likely that you are already slightly dehydrated.

Monitoring the colour of urine provides a good indication of being dehydrated. The target is to achieve numbers 1, 2 or 3. Numbers 4 and 5 suggest dehydration, with colours 6, 7 and 8 indicating severe dehydration.

Urine Colour Chart, used to monitor hydration status

Rehydrating

For each kg of weight lost through sweat replace with 1.5 litres of fluids. Remember that along with water, electrolytes are also lost through sweat – water alone will not replace these electrolytes. Sports drinks contain both carbohydrate for energy and electrolytes. Ensure that your sports drink has a carbohydrate level of 6 – 8%.

To help reduce the muscular damage caused by training and games it is best if you consume a source of protein along with your sports drink. Some sports drinks contain a source of protein, however if yours does not, try to consume something light prior to your post-training meal such as a chicken or turkey sandwich. If you do not have access to sports drinks, your post exercise meal can help replace lost electrolytes.

An easy way to make your own sports drink is to combine:

- 200ml of orange squash (concentrated orange)
- 1 litre of water
- A pinch of salt (1g)
- Mix all the ingredients together and keep chilled – drinks are absorbed more quickly if they are cool rather than ice cold.

What can a coach do to encourage good hydration habits?

- For each game and training session, encourage players to bring their own drinks bottle.
- Make time for regular fluid breaks during a training session.
- Fluid bottles must be washed out after each use and made up from scratch every day for food safety purposes.
- Have a supply of extra fluid bottles in a cooler after training and games.

Combating Dehydration

- Monitor hydration status using the WUT Chart above
- Aim to drink 2 litres of fluids each day as part of your regular routine
- Drink additional fluids before, during and after training and games

- Aim to drink 200 - 50ml of fluids 2 hours before a game - remember many referees begin training or games already in a dehydrated state
- Try to sip 125 - 250ml every 15 - 20 minutes to top up fluid levels
- Begin to replace any fluids lost during training or a game immediately afterwards by drinking at least 500ml of fluids
- Electrolytes, such as sodium or potassium will help rehydration
- To completely rehydrate, consume 150% of the amount of fluids lost - for each 1Kg of weight lost, consume 1.5 litres of fluids
- Avoid alcohol or caffeine containing drinks until you have completely rehydrated as they can increase urine output

Thirst	Dizziness/confusion
Anxiousness/worry	Dry lips/mouth
Headache	Poor coordination