

Hydration for the Athlete

Stay Hydrated – Drink Water

A well-balanced and nutritious diet is important for young athletes to support growing bodies, keep them healthy, and give them fuel to perform their best. In addition to eating the right foods, young athletes need to stay hydrated. Athletes should never be thirsty; hydration is key when it comes to athletic performance and recovery. Water is the best choice.

Milk – A great sports drink

Milk is a great beverage to support young athlete performance and healthy development. It is high in calcium and fortified with Vitamin D. Drink non-fat (skim) or low-fat (1%) plain milk. Stay away from milk with higher fat content (2% and whole milk). They contain too much unhealthy (saturated) fat. Avoid flavored milk like chocolate milk. Young athletes don't need the extra sugar.

Sports and Energy Drinks – Choose water first!

According to the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, sports drinks, energy drinks and soda contribute the largest percent of calories from added sugars in Americans' diets.

Sports drinks may help if you exercise hard continuously for more than 1 hour, especially in very hot and humid weather, or sweat a lot. They can replace lost fluid and replenish energy stores with carbohydrates and some vitamins and minerals. But most kids do not need the extra sugar, salt and calories in sports drinks. Just because a soccer game lasts an hour does not mean each player was active and sweating for an hour. A typical young athlete spends at least part of practice or games standing, watching and listening; they are not active the entire time.

Water should be your *first* choice before sports drinks. What you can get from a sports drink should come from a healthy, balanced diet first.

Energy drinks should be avoided all together. They have extra calories, sugar, caffeine and other ingredients that you do not need. They might make you dehydrated and make your heart beat too fast!

What to drink*:

- More than 2 hours before event: plain low-fat milk
- 1-2 hours before event: 10-14 oz water
- 10-15 minutes before event: 10-12 oz water
- Every 15-20 minutes during event: 4-6 oz water
- For every pound of weight lost after exercise: 16-24 oz cool fluids

Feed your athlete's body what it needs!

*Spear. Sports Nutrition, 2005.