

Keeping it Cool: Hydration Tips for Athletes

The information below is to assist student-athletes in maintaining a proper level of hydration, particularly when practicing in hot or humid conditions.

- Maintaining a proper level of hydration is extremely important from a health perspective as well as a performance perspective. As a player's level of hydration decreases, the player's strength, stamina, and level of performance also decreases. More importantly, an appropriate level of hydration is necessary to help prevent heat stroke and other serious adverse consequences.
- To assist in maintaining a proper level of hydration
 - Drink 12 to 20 ounces of water within 30 minutes before a practice or workout.
 - During exercise, match fluids lost through sweat with fluid intake. The amount that you sweat will be determined by the air quality, how hot it is, and the intensity of the workout. When you get thirsty, get water or ask the coach if you can get water.
 - Continue to drink fluids after completion of the exercise – adequate re-hydration can take up to 12 hours.
 - Weigh yourself and record your weight daily. You should begin each practice or workout weighing approximately the same as you weighed at the beginning of the previous practice or workout.
 - Check urine output – dark yellow, reduced urine, or urine with a strong odor generally signifies dehydration.
- Water is an essential part of proper hydration; some “sports” drinks (Gatorade, Powerade, etc.) are also efficient for hydration purposes.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages, including sodas, coffee products, and “energy” drinks. They are absorbed at a slower rate and may actually increase dehydration. Among other issues, these types of fluids often “fool” the body into thinking it is hydrated when in fact it is not. These types of drinks often give you a premature feeling that you are “filled”.
- Regarding heat, if possible, on hot days wear light-weight and light colored clothing. Also, apply adequate sunscreen to avoid sunburn.
- Inform the coach of any health issues that you may have, for instance, asthma. This information is extremely important for a coach.
- Be aware of, and report to the coach, any of the following conditions that may signal a significant level of dehydration that merits immediate attention:
 - Cessation of sweating (your body is not producing sweat even though you are exercising heavily and/or it is hot).
 - Excessive weakness or fatigue (you feel more weak or tired than you should).
 - Cramping.
 - Pale or flushed skin (your skin is “whiter” than normal, or an abnormal color).
 - Chills (you may feel cold even though it is hot outside).
 - Nausea (you feel like you need to throw-up).
 - Unsteadiness or dizziness (you feel lightheaded or dizzy).
 - Incoherence (you feel “out-of-it” – you do not understand what someone is saying).