



Staying hydrated when exercising in the heat

The summer is finally bringing some wonderful weather, and whether you are a keen athlete or a casual sports person, staying hydrated is going to be particularly important during these very hot days.

Proper hydration not only helps perform at your best but also keeps you focused and feeling good overall. So, when it comes to picking the right drink, it's good to know the different options and how they affect your body.

Hydration is key in athletic performance. When you work out, your body sweats to cool down. Sweating means you lose fluids and salts, and if you don't replenish them, you risk dehydration. This results in fatigue, decreased cognitive function, and impaired physical performance. While water is great for everyday life, it might not be the best choice when you're sweating more than usual. So let's look at ways to replace these lost fluids and electrolytes.

For most athletes, an isotonic drink is the go-to option, especially during prolonged exercise. It's usually well-tolerated, helps keep you optimally hydrated and provides a bit of energy to keep you going. An isotonic drink typically contains 4-8g of carbohydrates and electrolytes such as sodium, magnesium, and potassium. However, during high-intensity workouts, some athletes may find that they better tolerate a hypotonic drink. It contains less sugar (less than 4g of carbohydrates per 100ml) and, as a result, will lead to fewer gut troubles.

But when choosing your rehydration drinks, it is important to consider individual preferences and what your body can handle. The type of sugar used can affect how well you tolerate the drink. Some athletes may experience digestive issues with certain sugars or added ingredients such as flavouring agents, emulsifiers, or sweeteners. What works for some athletes may not be the best option for you, so it is important to experiment and find what suits you best. It is also worth noting that drinking smaller volumes more frequently will also minimise gut discomfort.

Now, what about energy drinks, you may ask? These are considered hypertonic drinks as they have a high content of carbohydrates, more than 8g/100ml. While they may help in the recovery phase, they are not ideal for rehydration as they do not contain salt. My advice is to stay away from them.

In my opinion, nothing beats a homemade rehydration drink. It's affordable, and you can customise it to fit your taste, needs, and tolerance. Here's a recipe for you to try out:

In a 1l water bottle, mix together 500ml of orange juice + 500ml of water, and dissolve a 1/4 teaspoon of salt.

With this recipe, you can tailor the drink to your liking and get the right amount of carbohydrates (you will get ~ 4-8g per 100ml, ideal for an isotonic drink, change the ratio of water:juice for hypotonic) for optimal hydration and comfort. Feel free to get creative with different fruit juices or cordials to make it tastier. After all, the more you enjoy the flavour, the more likely you'll keep sipping and stay hydrated throughout your activities!

Clemence Cleave

Clemence Cleave (MSc, RNutr) is an award-winning registered nutritionist and founder of Rocket Fuel Wellbeing. She specialised in women's health, weight management, eating behaviours and gut health. She sees clients either face-to-face at the Tulloch Clinic at Roehampton Club or online.

Contact Clem directly at clem@rocketfuelwellbeing.com

For face-to-face booking at the Tulloch Clinic, go to www.tullochclinicandbeautystudio.co.uk

To find out more www.RocketFuelWellbeing.com