

Hydration choices: Are sports drinks right for you?

Many different types of athletes can benefit from the use of a sports drink that contains carbohydrate and sodium to help improve hydration and athletic performance. It is always important to try a sports drink in training first before using it in competition. If you aren't exercising for over an hour, but you are sweating a lot, choose an electrolyte replacer. Those contain electrolytes without the carbs.

Sports drinks are:

- NOT energy drinks
- NOT everyday drinks, save for exercising only
 - They contain carbs and electrolytes (salt) your body needs when exercising, but not throughout the day. Carbs and electrolytes improve hydration levels

If you don't sweat it, you don't get it!



What you need to know

- Reserve sports drinks for higher effort workouts:
 - Exercising for at least 60-90 minutes
 - Hot/humid environment
 - Excessive and/or salty sweaters (taste salt when sweating or white deposits on clothes after workouts)
- Sports drinks have correct concentration of simple carbs (Glucose and fructose)
 - Other sugary beverages, such as juice/soda, are too concentrated and can cause GI upset

When to choose a sports drink

Sports drinks are specially designed to replace the sweat and electrolytes (sodium, potassium, chloride, magnesium and calcium) that you lose in sweat and to provide energy in the form of carbohydrate for active muscles and the brain. They can benefit a wide variety of athletes, including those:

- With very high sweat rates (1L/h or more);
- Exercising either very hard or for a long time including endurance and team sport athletes
- Exercising in hot/humid conditions, like a wrestling room or swimming pool, or if you're in full pads, like hockey or football.
- If you're a salty sweater (you taste salt when sweating or see white deposits on your clothes after your workout).