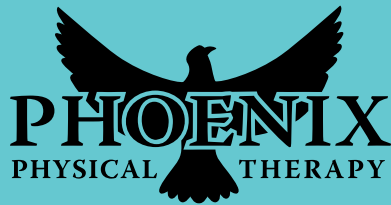


# PHYSICAL THERAPY CORNER

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## HYDRATION: WHAT, WHEN AND HOW MUCH

Written by: Scott D Van Bramer, PT

Fluid intake is essential to good health. Water is needed to regulate your temperature, maintain joint health and to deliver essential vitamins and minerals. Dehydration leads to impaired nerve and muscle function due to the imbalance of sodium and potassium within the body. Brain and muscle function become impaired causing decreased muscle coordination and impaired athletic performance.

Early signs and symptoms of dehydration include headaches, dry mouth, chills, dry skin, excessive thirst, and fatigue. The color of ones urine is a good indicator of proper hydration. Improper hydration will cause your urine to become a dark yellow. Signs of worsening dehydration are increased body temperature, heart rate and body temperature. If you become confused, have vision disturbances and difficulty breathing seek immediate medical attention.

Your risk of dehydration increases when you sweat excessively, increase your exercise intensity and duration, when the temperature is high and at high altitudes.

The American Council on Fitness suggests these guidelines for moderate to high intensity exercise:

- Drink 17-20 ounces of water 2 to 3 hours before you start exercising
- Drink 8 ounces of water 20-30 minutes before you start exercising or during your warm-up
- Drink 7-10 ounces of water every 10-20 minutes during exercise
- Drink 8 ounces of water no more than 30 minutes after you exercise

WOW THAT IS A LOT!! But it shows us how much fluid we can lose during higher levels of exercise and why it is so important to stay hydrated. It is very important to drink water before, during and after practices and games especially in the warmer months.

Many sports teams will weigh the athletes before and after practice to determine the amount of fluid lost. The recommended weight loss limit due to fluid loss is 2% of your own body weight per day. It is recommended that you drink 16-24 ounces of water for every pound lost.

**ARE SPORTS DRINKS BETTER THAN WATER?** Definitely in taste but nothing hydrates the body better than water. Sports drinks do provide more potassium, minerals and other electrolytes which will help you sustain your performance during exercise and may help you recover quicker especially in workouts over one hour in duration. The biggest problem with sports drinks is the sugar content. Many of them have multiple servings per bottle. Glucose is essential but you do not need as much as you will find in most sports drinks. I recommend a combination of water and a low sugar sports drink. Research also indicates that chocolate milk may help the athlete recover more quickly when consumed after exercise due to its carbohydrate and protein content.

If you have any questions you may call me at **(614-834-2995)**. You should also consult your pediatrician or family physician if you feel that you or your child has problems with dehydration.