

Balance: The Answer to Safe Hydration

FOCUS

Kee in mind that dehydration still is one of the biggest risks in endurance exercise, but the key to performing at your best is to drink smart—don't gulp liquids.

Know Your Sweat Rate

The best way to avoid drinking too much or too little is to take in about the same amount of fluid as you sweat out. Here's how to figure out your sweat rate:

- Weigh yourself without shoes or clothes, and record it in a log, noting temperature and humidity.
 - Work out for one hour.
 - Dry off and weigh yourself, noting the amount of weight lost. Also note any fluids you may have taken while running.
 - Use this formula to determine your hydration needs: *One pound lost = 16 ounces of fluid.*
- So, if you lost two pounds in that hour, you should

replenish 32 ounces of fluid (about 8 ounces every 15 minutes) in the same temperature and humidity level.

Do this test a few times in different conditions to get a sense of how your hydration needs change in varying temperatures and humidity levels, as well as different intensity levels.

Tips for Smart Hydration

To make sure you meet but don't exceed your hydration needs:

- Set your watch alarm to remind you when to drink.
- Aim to replenish 80 to 100 percent of fluids lost.
- Avoid gaining weight (a sign of overhydrating).
- Consume a sports drink with electrolytes (sodium, potassium, etc.) during your training sessions and in races longer than 60 minutes. Plain water is fine for workouts shorter than 60 minutes.
- Flavor your meals with salt right before long workouts and races to boost electrolyte levels.
- Avoid drinking more than usual during race week to avoid diluting your blood-sodium levels and putting yourself at higher risk of developing hyponatremia. Your fluid needs drop during this taper week. Drink normal amounts and use the urine test to determine if you've had enough fluids: If it runs pale yellow, you're well-hydrated and ready to race. ■

Photo by PH1 Shane T. McCoy



Marines hand out water and sports drinks during the 29th annual Marine Corps Marathon.

Resources:

- <http://sportsmedicine.about.com/cs/nutrition/a/aa070703a.htm> [*Water Intoxication (Hyponatremia)*]
- http://www.jnj.com/news/jnj_news/20031030_105713.htm;jsessionid=SYIOZSU15OEKGCQPCAOWU3YKB2IIWTT1 [*Runners Beware: Over-Hydration Can Be More Dangerous Than Dehydration*]
- http://www.active.com/story.cfm?story_id=11764&category=activewomen [*Hydration Confusion: How Much Is Too Much*]
- http://www.weightlossresources.co.uk/diet/healthy_eating/too_much_water.htm [*Can You Drink Too Much Water?*]
- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5630821> [*Athletes Run Risk of Over-Hydrating*].