

## **Hydration – How much is enough?**

Water is the most important factor in sports nutrition. Water makes up approximately 60% of body weight and is involved in almost every body process. Your body cannot make or store water, so you must replace the water you eliminate in your urine and sweat.

Everyone should drink at least 2 quarts (8 cups) of water each day, and athletes need more. Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after sports events to stay hydrated and to avoid overheating. When you work out or compete, especially in hot weather, try to closely match the amount of fluid you drink with the amount you lose in sweat.

Cool water is the best fluid to keep you hydrated during workouts or events that last an hour or less. Sports drinks containing 6% to 10% carbohydrates are useful for longer events. Most sports drinks should be diluted with approximately 50% water.

Drink water even if you are not thirsty. Thirst is not a reliable way to tell if you need water. You won't start feeling thirsty until you have already lost about 2% of body weight--enough to hurt performance. Also, if you stop drinking water once your thirst is satisfied, you will get only about half the amount you need.

Some tips for staying hydrated:

- Drink small amounts of water frequently, rather than large amounts less often.
- Drink cold beverages to cool your core body temperature and reduce sweating.
- Weigh yourself after working out, and drink 2 to 3 cups of water for every pound lost. Your body weight should be back to normal before the next workout.
- Pay attention to the amount and color of your urine. You should excrete a large volume that is nearly colorless. Small amounts of urine or dark yellow-colored urine can indicate dehydration.