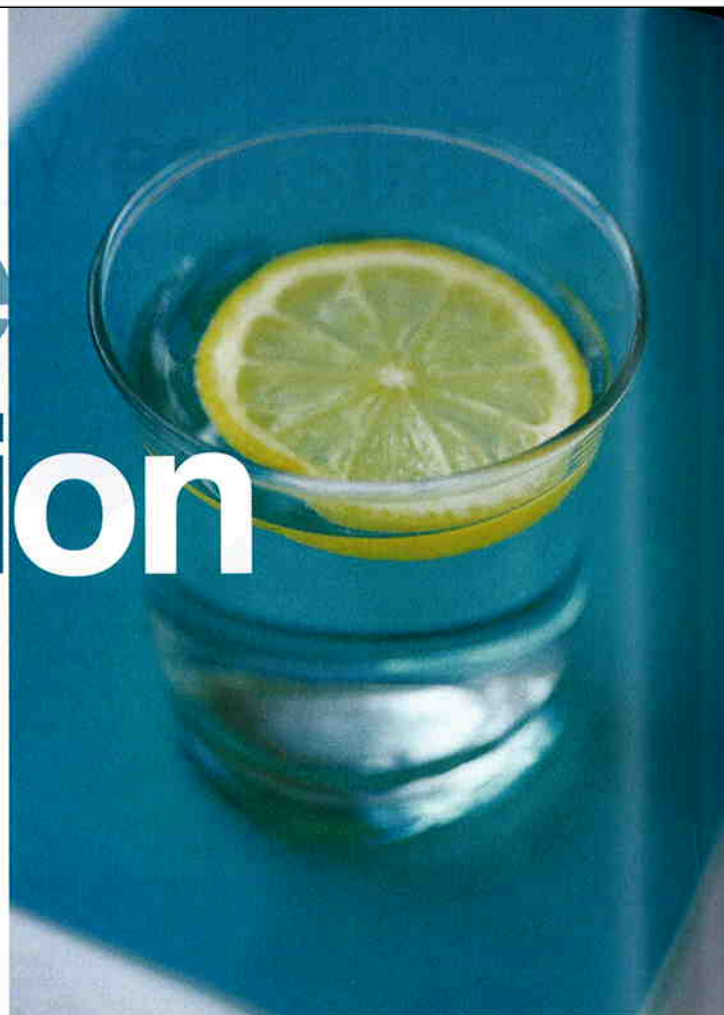




nutrition

Exercise and Hydration

by Shane Bilsborough MSc (Human Nutrition)



As we head into the hottest period of the Australian summer, it is essential to start thinking seriously about hydration when attempting exercise. Hydration becomes more of a challenge in summer for many people, whether they work outdoors in the hot sun or indoors in an air-conditioned office where the air is dry and the beverage of choice is often coffee. During any exercise, especially if intense or lengthy, sweat-induced dehydration can significantly reduce performance. Humid or ambient temperatures can reduce performance even further. Other factors, such as safety, also come into play.

Water

Sports science needs to be balanced with simple day-to-day nutrition. When it comes to fluids, our lives are sometimes dominated by coffee, tea, soft drinks, wine or beer. Unfortunately, the good old-fashioned glass of water can take a back seat. Balance is important in any aspect of nutrition, so if you have a juice or a tea or coffee (or two!), seek to also drink 4-5 glasses of water a day and even more when it's humid.

Caffeine

Caffeine and other products containing caffeine, including coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cola and chocolate, can leave your body dehydrated. Caffeine can have some positive effects on sports performance, however it is a diuretic, so it causes your body to lose water, rather than retain it. So reduce caffeine consumption to reduce your risk of dehydration.

Sometimes we may not even know we're dehydrated. Recent studies state that signs of mild dehydration include:

- Lack of concentration
- Decreased short-term memory
- Sluggish workplace performance
- Headaches
- Migraines
- Misinterpreted hunger signals

Sports Drinks

Sports drinks or carbohydrate-electrolyte drinks are one of the most well-researched and proven sports nutrition tools. These drinks not only provide carbohydrates and electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium that are lost through sweat, but deliver these nutrients to the body quickly, as the body needs them.

Before Sport

If you're undertaking an endurance event or race, sports drinks are ideal to top up your body's muscle glycogen stores, preferably an hour prior to the event. This is a good habit to get into during training as well. Experiment with your consumption and timing to develop a better understanding of what works best for you.

During Sport

Sports drinks are best consumed during endurance-type training. Water is perhaps a better option if you're training to lose weight or stay in shape, or during weight training and shorter-distance treadmill running, rowing or cycling.

After Sport

Sports drinks are ideal to aid recovery from prolonged exercise, exercise in the heat where profuse sweating has occurred, or when another exercise session is just around the corner. When extensive recovery is paramount, aim for a sports drink with higher sodium content. For people trying to lose weight, sports drinks are perhaps not the answer, except in the case of prolonged exercise and/or exercise in the heat. **UF**