



## Sports and Energy Drinks

When it comes to hydrating athletes, there's a large selection of pop, juices, iced tea, and bottled water to choose from. Another category of beverages is causing a buzz: sports and energy drinks. Sports and energy drinks usually claim to "do" something, whether its increase energy and alertness, boost nutrition, or even enhance athletic performance. But is this a good choice?

### Do Athletes Need Something Extra to Avoid Dehydration?

Not necessarily. The average young athlete can and should get all the necessary nutrients and hydration by eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water before, during, and after exercise. During games and competitive events, drinks should be available at all times and regular water breaks should be scheduled about every 10-20 minutes. The amount of water needed can vary depending on age, weight, intensity of the activity, and weather conditions.

**If you are not a fan of plain water, try adding a splash of lemon or orange juice. You'll get the taste of a flavored water at a fraction of the cost!**

### Evaluating the Choices

- **Pop** is not recommended during sports and should be avoided because the carbonation can cause an upset stomach. Many pops also contain caffeine, which can cause dehydration.
- **Sports drinks** may be beneficial if the physical activity is **prolonged** and **vigorous** lasting **longer than an hour**. These drinks contain carbohydrates (sugar), which can provide an immediate source of energy at a time when the body's stores are becoming depleted. Sports drinks also contain electrolytes, like sodium and potassium, which the body loses through sweat. Electrolytes are necessary to keep the body's fluid levels in balance and for muscles to work properly.
- **Vitamin Waters**, also know as fitness waters or enhanced waters, come in many flavors and contain various combinations of supplemental vitamins and minerals. This may look like a quick way to fill a nutritional gap. However, sometimes they can provide too much of a good thing, particularly if you are already getting enough of these nutrients. Getting more than the recommended daily allowance of vitamins and mineral can be harmful to health.
- **Energy Drinks** are becoming increasingly popular with youth. Most energy drinks deliver a stiff dose of sugar and caffeine-sometimes as much caffeine as in 1-3 cups of coffee. Too much sugar can cause cavities and weight gain. Excessive caffeine can cause jitteriness, nervousness, upset stomach, headaches, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, and frequent urination (which can lead to dehydration). Many of these drinks contain additional ingredients which have never been tested on young people-including herbal supplements, guarana (a source of caffeine), and taurine (an amino acid thought to enhance performance and caffeine's effects). Energy drinks can be unhealthy, pose a health risk for teens, and should be avoided.

*Remember that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Most athletes who eat well, stay hydrated, and get enough physical activity and rest will have plenty of energy-naturally!*

If you have additional questions, please visit your school's Certified Athletic Trainer.

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