Performance Hydration

Water is one of the most essential components of the human body. Did you know when babies are born they are approximately 75% water? As we grow, we lose water, however adult bodies are still about 60% water. With water making up so much of the body, it’s no surprise that it plays an important part in keeping our bodies healthy.

Some ‘fun facts’ about water:
- It regulates body temperature
- It helps protect the heart and lungs
- It helps in healthy digestion.

So how much water do we really need?
The Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends:
- Men 17 years and older drink 112-125 ounces (14-15 2/3 cups of water)
- Women 17 years and older drink 78-91 ounces (10-11 ½ cups of water)

Dehydration
How we lose water: through sweating, breathing, urine and stool. Because we lose fluid it is important to replenish the losses; if we don’t drink enough water throughout the day then we become dehydrated.
- Effects of dehydration:
  - Loss of coordination
  - Decreased level of energy
  - Muscle fatigue
  - Muscle cramping
  - Heat exhaustion and possibly heat stroke

Why is water important for our muscles?
If you are dehydrated, the muscles can shrivel, leading to muscle fatigue. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends that people drink about 17 ounces of water about two hours before exercise and physical activity. During exercise, they recommend that people start drinking water early, and drink at regular intervals to replace sweat losses.
How do you know if you are hydrated?
If you are too busy to keep track of how much water you drink, here is a simple way to know if you are hydrated. Check the color of your urine! When you’re hydrated, urine is clear, light in color and free of odor. When you’re dehydrated, urine is more concentrated, darker in color and has a more distinct odor. Here is a helpful urine color chart. Optimal hydration is represented by colors 1-3, dehydration is colors 4 and 5, and severe dehydration is colors 6-8.

With the temperatures (finally!) beginning to cool down, you may not feel as thirsty and forget to drink water. But remember the importance of water for optimal health and physical performance. Try adding fruit to your water for added flavor. Here are some ideas:

- Lemon Water
- Strawberry Cucumber Water
- Watermelon Mint Water
- Apple Cinnamon Water

References

