

## Hydration for Young Athletes

Hydration is important for optimal athletic performance. Staying hydrated helps your body function properly in conditions like heat, humidity, cold, and high altitude.

### What should you drink?

- If practice or competition lasts less than one hour, water is the best choice to stay hydrated.
- If activity will last longer than one hour, or is very intense, a sports drink will provide fuel for working muscles and electrolytes that are lost in sweat.
- Look for sports drinks that have the following main ingredients: water, carbohydrate (sucrose and dextrose), sodium, and potassium.
- These drinks are not recommended:
  - Pediatric rehydration products (such as Pedialyte), coconut water, “enhanced” waters, and low calorie sports drinks do not contain the appropriate balance of carbohydrates and electrolytes to be used as sports drinks.
  - Sports drinks that contain B vitamins or caffeine may have excessive nutrients that can be harmful for young athletes.

### Comparison of different drink choices

Beverage	Original Gatorade® 8 oz	Pedialyte® 8 oz	Vitamin Water™ “Essential” 8 oz	O.N.E. Coconut Water™ 8 oz
Calories per 8 oz	50	25	50	43
Carbohydrate	14 g	6 g	13 g	11 g
Sodium	110 mg	244 mg	0 mg	43 mg
Potassium	30 mg	184 mg	72 mg	479 mg
Typical Package size	20 oz	6.8 oz	20 oz	11.2 oz
Calories per package	125	21	120	60
Approximate cost (at local grocery store)	5 cents per oz	15 cents per oz	7 cents per oz	20 cents per oz

### When should you drink?

- Throughout the day. The most effective and least expensive way to stay hydrated is to carry your own reusable water bottle with you.
- Before exercise: start drinking fluids about 4 hours before practice or competition
- During exercise: every 15-30 minutes depending on climate conditions and length of practice or competition (if your athlete plays the entire game, pre-game hydration is particularly important)
- After exercise: to replace fluid and electrolytes lost through sweating

### How much should you drink?

The amount of water or sports drink you need is different for each athlete. To make sure you are getting enough fluids, monitor your urine color and pay attention to thirst. If your urine seems dark, you need to drink more fluids! If you are thirsty, you need to drink more fluids!

### An example hydration plan:

An average-sized 15 year old soccer player could follow this schedule for a game:

- 4 hours before: 10 oz of water
- 2 hours before: 6 oz of water
- During the game: 20 oz of sports drink split into 4 5-oz servings
- After the game: 8 oz of water or low fat chocolate milk

### Special Considerations:

- Early morning games require planning ahead. Maintaining hydration the day before is essential. Using urine color and thirst as a guide, encourage athletes to start drinking an appropriate amount of water as early as possible before their game.
- Tournaments also require extra attention to hydration. Your post-game fluid should contain carbohydrates, protein, and electrolytes for recovery. Low-fat chocolate milk is a great option.

To learn more about **Sports Medicine for Young Athletes**, visit [childrenscolorado.org/sports](http://childrenscolorado.org/sports). For ongoing tips about young athletes, subscribe to our blog, Colorado Sport Stop, at [childrenscolorado.org/sportsblog](http://childrenscolorado.org/sportsblog).

Contact your athletic trainer or sports nutrition dietitian if your athlete struggles with dehydration and could benefit from an individualized hydration plan.

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