

Drink Up

Most people need to drink about 2 litres of water every day just to replace the fluid that is lost in the course of every day living. More than that is required to replace the additional fluid that is lost during fitness activities and sport.

When we exercise our body warms up and sweating is the body's way of cooling itself down. Substantial fluid can be lost through sweat and this is increased further when physical activity is done in warm, humid conditions, and when it is intense or undertaken for an extended period of time (eg, more than an hour). If the fluid that is lost through physical activity is not replaced the body cannot adequately cool itself, heart rate is increased, motor control and coordination deteriorate, and normal body functions are impaired. These effects can be serious.

January – February is the hottest time of the year in Canberra and so now is a good time to pay special attention to the importance of hydration when exercising.

- Drink water regularly throughout the day. Have a drink of water with every meal and snack.
- Avoid drinks that have sugar and caffeine in them.
- Drink 200-600mls of fluid 1-2 hours before exercising.
- Have a few sips (up to 200mls) of fluid every 15 minutes during exercise.
- While exercising try to drink fluid that is cooler than air temperature.
- For activities lasting up to an hour, water is a good fluid replacement.
- For activities that exceed an hour and for high intensity activities, fluid is best replaced with a carbohydrate based sports drink.
- When exercising in extreme conditions or for very extended periods of time (eg, 5-6 hours) sports drink with electrolytes is recommended for fluid replacement. Without the consumption of electrolytes under these conditions it is possible to develop over-hydration (or hyponatremia). This occurs when a high intake of electrolyte free fluid results in low blood sodium concentration. This can be very dangerous.
- Continue to replace fluid for 1-2 hours after exercising. For every kilogram of weight lost in sweat while exercising it is necessary to drink 1500mls of fluid post exercise to re-hydrate. 200-250mls every 15-20 minutes for 1-2 hours should suffice under most circumstances.

With proper fluid replacement – before, during and after physical activity – your body will be in a healthy state of fluid balance and your physical activity performance will be greatly enhanced. So, Drink Up!