

Hydration for the Child Athlete

Athlete Scenerio

I love basketball and I play it all year! I get really sweaty and thirsty at practice but we don't stop for water breaks very often. Sometimes I forget to bring a water bottle. We always have water at games, but I usually don't remember to drink anything unless I'm really thirsty. I see professional basketball players drinking sports drinks on TV. Should I drink them too?

Goals of Hydration:

- Start practice well-hydrated by drinking water periodically throughout the day.
- Keep fluid loss to a minimum during practice and games to avoid dehydration.
- Replace fluids lost during exercise by drinking immediately after practice or games and throughout the day.

Strategies to Help Young Athletes Stay Hydrated :

- Within the hour before exercise, encourage drinking 8–20 oz. of fluid (water or sports drink).
- Children need fluids (3–5 oz.) every 15–20 minutes during practice or games and encouragement to drink whenever thirsty. Aim for 12–20 oz. per hour.
- Provide sports drinks during vigorous physical activity that lasts over an hour or when temperatures are hot to replace fluids and electrolytes. For events under an hour, water is sufficient.
- Encourage drinking immediately after exercise: 16–24 oz. (per pound lost), or more if temperatures were hot and sweating was heavy. A white residue on the skin or clothing indicates sodium loss and suggests a sports drink to rehydrate.

Written by SCAN registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) to provide nutrition guidance. The key to optimal meal planning is individualization. Contact a SCAN RDN or a Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) for personalized nutrition plans. Access "Find a SCAN RDN" at www.scandpg.org or by phone at 800.249.2875.

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Tips to Take With You

1. Check your urine color—clear to light yellow usually indicates adequate hydration.
2. Drink frequently during exercise by following your personal hydration plan. One gulp equals about an ounce of fluid.
3. A sports RD (registered dietitian) can help you develop a personalized hydration strategy.

Contact SCAN

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