Proper Hydration for Athletes

Proper hydration is a key to successful athletic performance. More importantly, it can also help prevent heat-related illness. In athletes, dehydration can cause decreased coordination, fatigue and muscle cramps. It is important to monitor fluid intake before, during and after exertion.

Early signs of dehydration
The first signs of dehydration can be non-specific and include:

- Dark urine
- Dry lips and mouth
- Thirst

Signs of advanced dehydration
When the body experiences advanced dehydration, the symptoms may include:

- Decreased athletic performance
- Muscle cramps
- Fatigue
- Disorientation
- Dizziness
- Apathy
- Irritability
- Increased heart rate and breathing

Athletes with any of these signs should rest and drink water or sports drinks. If athletes don’t improve, feel dizzy or faint, or are not producing urine output, they should be seen by a doctor. Seek emergency treatment if an athlete is disoriented, unable to drink or has pale skin.
The AMITA Health Orthopedics Institute is a national leader in musculoskeletal care, offering comprehensive and advanced care for a wide range of conditions. We are proactive about keeping you active. That is why our multi-disciplinary orthopedic teams enlist a comprehensive leading-edge approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries.

Our team of highly-experienced board-certified doctors, surgeons, therapists and nurses are dedicated to providing patients of all ages with a personalized treatment program that is customized for their condition, lifestyle and personal preferences.

We work to prevent sports-related injuries, which have become increasingly more common among athletes, especially children. AMITA Health Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons keep kids active and participating in the extracurricular activities they enjoy by delivering educational programs and support for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic care.

Hydration Before Exertion
You should stay well hydrated several days before a workout or competition. Passing a large amount of pale urine about six times per day indicates you’re drinking enough of the right kinds of fluids, specifically water. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages. About an hour prior to a workout, drink 16–24 ounces of water or other non-caffeinated beverage. Immediately before the activity, drink another four to eight ounces of water or a sports drink.

Hydration During Exertion
During exercise, you should drink six to eight ounces of fluid every 20 minutes. During periods of exertion lasting longer than 60 minutes, some of what you drink should include a sports drink to replace lost sodium and other minerals (electrolytes).

Hydration After Exertion
Rehydrate after activity with water or a sports drink by taking in 20–24 ounces for every pound of fluid lost. Your urine should appear light yellow. If it's dark, keep drinking fluids.

Treatment For Dehydration
Treatment for mild to moderate dehydration can often be rest and simple rehydration by drinking fluids. Intravenous (IV) fluids may be required in some cases of moderate dehydration. Cases of severe dehydration should be treated as a medical emergency and hospitalization, along with IV fluids, is necessary. Immediate action should be taken.

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416.