

## Dehydration

*Dehydration refers to the loss of body fluids, which can affect the functioning of vital body organs such as the kidneys, brain and heart*

### Fact

- Dehydration most commonly occurs at high temperatures and high altitudes
- Reduction of body fluid levels leads to dehydration and possibly heat stroke
- Drinking before, during and after physical activity is essential to staying hydrated
- On hot, humid days, an active person can become dehydrated in just 15 minutes

### Spotting the signs and symptoms

Signs that dehydration is occurring include feeling thirsty, having dry lips, tongue and mouth, lacking energy, feeling dizzy and muscle cramping. Signs of more severe dehydration include nausea or vomiting, headaches, rapid shallow breathing and/or a rapid heartbeat. Ways to check you are staying sufficiently hydrated include:

- Looking at the color of your urine. A pale yellow color signifies appropriate hydration levels, whereas a dark brown or yellow color points to dehydration, and an inadequate fluid intake.
- Weighing yourself before and after physical activity. Each pound of weight lost relates to over 15 oz (nearly half a liter) of fluid lost, and approximately 24 oz (over 6 cups) of fluid should be consumed to prevent dehydration from occurring. *(Each kilogram of weight lost relates to approximately 1 liter of fluid, therefore 1.5 liters of fluid should be consumed to prevent dehydration).*

### What causes it and why is it a problem?

Dehydration, the lack of adequate body fluids for normal functioning at an optimal level, is caused by a loss of, and/or inadequate intake of water and important blood salts (such as potassium). At high temperatures, dehydration occurs more quickly. Excessive water loss from the body can occur through vomiting, excessive sweating, or diarrhea. This in turn can lead to dizziness, fatigue and poor coordination, and eventually a complete loss of consciousness.

### Avoiding and preventing dehydration

At least 64 oz (eight 8 oz cups) of fluid should be consumed daily. Water makes up approximately 70% of our muscles, and 75% of our brains, making it one of the most important nutrients in our body. Dehydration is 100% preventable, so follow these tips to avoid becoming dehydrated while participating in physical activity.



- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after physical activity
- If experiencing any of the signs or symptoms listed above, stop activity, rest in a cool place and drink fluids to replenish the water lost
- Water and fruit juices are good sources of fluid to consume in time outside of physical activity participation
- Sports drinks can encourage people to drink more fluids because they are flavored and are higher in sodium
- Avoid carbonated drinks (sodas) which can cause bloating or a feeling of fullness, and prevent adequate consumption of fluids for maintaining hydration
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, absorbable clothing during physical activity

*For further information:*

Preventing Dehydration

<http://healthlink.mcw.edu/article/993748461.html>

The Dangers of Dehydration

[http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/first\\_aid/dehydration.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/safety/first_aid/dehydration.html)

Why is Dehydration so Dangerous?

<http://www.rehydrate.org/dehydration/index.html>

