

June 2006 Health Bulletin

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(Health Education through Extension Leadership) Staff

Cooperative Extension Service

Heat, Hydration and Physical Activity



Keeping your body well hydrated is important no matter the season! However, it becomes a necessity on hot summer days. Being hydrated means that you are taking in enough liquid to keep a healthy fluid balance in your body. When hydrated, the internal functions of your body work well.

Dehydration, or the loss of fluid from the body, occurs when you are physically active. As dehydration worsens, the amount sweat produced decreases, the body's ability to use oxygen for physical activity decreases, and there is a decrease in muscle strength. Once you feel thirsty, your body is already dehydrated. If dehydration persists, you may begin to feel discomfort with feelings of sluggishness and then nervousness. Dehydration can also cause irritability, fatigue, and a loss of appetite.

Dehydration is a serious matter. However, you can keep your body well hydrated in spite of the hot weather. The key is to start drinking fluids before you feel thirsty and to drink water regularly, even when you are not active.



So Many Choices

There are many drinks from which to choose! Water is the best choice for general, moderate-intensity physical activity that lasts less than one hour.

Follow these guidelines for water intake:

- ◆ Two hours **before** a physical activity session, 14 to 22 ounces of water
- ◆ **During** the session, drink 6 to 12 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes
- ◆ **Afterwards**, drink 16 to 24 ounces of water for every pound lost during your physical activity session



If weighing after physical activity is not practical for you, drinking 16 to 24 ounces of water after a moderate-intensity physical activity session should be enough to help you re-hydrate. However, if you are active in hot weather, you might be more dehydrated than you realize. Drink additional water to be on the safe side or consider weighing yourself to see how much you need. In addition, try to drink eight 8-ounce glasses, or 64 ounces, of water each day to keep the body well hydrated.

If you will be participating in more intense physical activity for greater than one hour, a sports drink may be needed. A lot of sweating depletes electrolytes such as sodium and potassium. Sports drinks are designed to replace these electrolytes. Keep in mind that these drinks **do** have calories. Avoid overloading on sports drinks and drink them only when necessary for your activity level.

Water is the best source for hydration. If you do not like plain water, try mixing it with a twist of lemon or lime for flavor. You can also mix it with a small amount of a sports drink. Giving water a little bit of a flavor or taste can make it easier to drink. Flavored waters are available and can help make the taste more enjoyable.

However, many flavored waters contain artificial sweeteners. If you are concerned with taking in artificial sweeteners, be sure to read the labels.



Remember, hydration is important no matter what the temperature is outside.

Always keep a bottle of water handy so that you can keep your body hydrated and functioning well.



Monthly Get Moving Kentucky! Tip

You can beat the heat with summer physical activity!

Plan your activity in the early morning or later evening hours when temperatures are cooler.

Drink plenty of fluids to keep your body well hydrated.

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To learn more about health issues in Kentucky, please visit: www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL

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