

Drink up! By Dave Quartermain

A key to successful Northern Wave swim workouts is keeping well hydrated before, during and after exercise. The length of your workouts, heat, humidity and the amount you sweat are all major factors to consider when trying to keep your body in proper fluid balance.

When dehydration occurs, the heart works harder in order to move blood through the bloodstream. Pre-hydration and re-hydration are vital to maintaining cardiovascular health, proper body temperature and muscle function.

Dehydration is a major cause of fatigue, poor performance, decreased co-ordination and muscle cramping.

Hydration tips

Start hydrating early . Drink 1-2 cups of water when you first get up in the morning

Keep a water bottle with you all day long (and at poolside!).

Drink before you get thirsty (thirst is a sign that your body is already dehydrated).

Drink 1-2 cups of fluid 30 minutes before exercise.

Drink 1 cup of fluid every 15 minutes of exercise for up to two hours.

Keep drinking even after your thirst is quenched.

Water VS Sports Drinks

For exercise lasting under 45 minutes, i.e. most Northern Wave sessions, water is your best choice. For the recreational athlete who may exercise for 30-40 minutes per session, water is sufficient for hydration.

Water is easily absorbed.

Water is the best choice to drink before moderate-length exercise.

Water is readily available and less expensive than sports drinks.

Research suggests that for workouts consisting of at least 45 minutes of continuous exercise or high intensity workouts of any duration like swimming, a sports drink may be beneficial in delaying muscle fatigue by providing your body with additional energy.

Sports drinks contain water, carbohydrates and electrolytes (generally sodium and potassium).

You can make your own by mixing one cup water, one cup orange juice and a pinch of salt.

How much is enough?

To get an idea of just how much you need to drink, you should weigh yourself before and after your workouts. Any weight decrease is probably due to water loss (sorry, but you didn't just lose a kilo of body fat). If you have lost a kilo or more during your workout you should drink 24 ounces of water for each kilo lost. (cont.)

Another way to determine your state of hydration is by monitoring your morning and pre-exercise heart rate. Over the course of a few weeks, you will see a pattern. This information can be extremely helpful in determining your state of recovery. Days when your heart rate is elevated above your norm may indicate a lack of complete recovery, possibly due to dehydration.

The Warning Signs of Dehydration

Dehydration can begin when you lose as little as 1 percent of body weight. As little as a 2% decrease in body weight from fluid loss (e.g. 1.2 lb for a 60-lb athlete) can lead to a significant decrease in muscular strength and stamina.

If you tire easily and repeatedly in practice, are unusually irritable, and your athletic performance suddenly declines, dehydration, and/or inadequate calorie intake may be the cause.

The following are also signs that you are dehydrated:

Dry lips and tongue

Bright coloured or dark urine, or urine with a strong odour

Small volume of urine

Apathy or lack of energy

So knowing what you know now be smart and stay hydrated not athletically frustrated!