

“To Hydrate or Wither: Your Choice!”

Thirsty? Drink lots of fluid, right?

Adequate fluid intake is essential during the hot summer outdoor meets. Extensive water loss may also occur during inside meets and can “sneak up” on swimmers, athletes, coaches, and spectators. Coffee, tea, and many caffeine containing sodas stimulate the kidneys to get rid of additional body water. Individuals also lose water through the skin and with breathing. Furthermore, intense exercise speeds up this water loss.

The initial warnings of dehydration may be very subtle and easily missed by even the most observant parent, friend, or coach. Signs of dehydration include increased irritability, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, faster heart rate, slower reaction time, and headache. Progressive dehydration leads to fainting episodes, very dry lips, and generalized weakness. Drinking thick, cold liquids (sodas, dextrose / electrolyte solutions, milk shakes) may quench the thirst, but such “heavy drinks” also draw the remaining water stores out of the tissues forcing it into the blood stream with subsequent water excretion (loss) through the kidneys. Fluid replacement should **NOT** be done initially with these “high density” liquids, but instead should be achieved with water.

After the first liter (quart) of water, the “thirsty” individual may drink one glass of dextrose / electrolyte solution for every two cups of water. Such electrolyte solutions will replace the sodium, potassium, chloride, and bicarbonate lost through the normal kidney excretion process. A large vessel of iced water should be a mainstay at every swim meet. On very hot days it may be prudent to have two, one on each side of the pool..

Be smart ... stay ahead of the hydration curve!