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June 20th, 2010, at 1:38 pm

Sports Nutrition 101 – Hydration

By Cory Holly

Anyone involved in sport, exercise or physical movement of any kind should recognize the importance of drinking sufficient water to keep the body well hydrated. 30ml (or one fluid ounce) of clean, filtered water per kilogram of lean mass is recommended daily plus 1-2 liters with added electrolytes to compensate for lost fluids.

Poor hydration can cause nausea, fatigue, headache, joint injuries, muscular weakness and even cardiac failure. A well hydrated body can adapt to physical activity and strenuous exercise with less risk of injury or loss of performance. During strenuous or prolonged physical activity, the water content of all body compartments decreases as a result of fluid loss through sweating and insensible water loss from the lungs, especially at high altitude.

Drinking filtered clean water alone does not cover electrolyte loss. Electrolytes are defined as inorganic salts (acid or base) dissolved in both cellular and extracellular fluid. They act as electromagnetic energy conductors. Important electrolytes include potassium, magnesium, phosphate, sulfate, bicarbonate, sodium, chloride and hydrogen.

Electrolytes carry both negative and positive electrical charges, which affect the bioelectrical status of cells. They regulate intracellular fluid volume, control the pH of cells and modulate fluid exchange within various fluid compartments allowing for a constant, well-regulated exchange of nutrients and waste products between the cell and its external fluid environment.

A good hydration electrolyte mix should be formulated to maximize fluid replacement and replenish electrolytes lost in sweat. The ideal potassium (K) to sodium (Na) ratio is 7:1. This is the same ratio found in all natural plant and animal food (land and sea) when calculated as an average. A small percentage of high-glycemic carbohydrates added to the solution (7%) is also helpful for sustaining energy during fitness events, gym workouts and recreational activity.

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