

## Hydration

It is incredibly important that you keep hydrated. Dehydration affects many of the body's processes and not only impairs your performances but also negatively affects your immune system.

Unfortunately, the body can lose fluid more quickly than it can absorb it so you need to have a re-hydration strategy post training and throughout the day. If you are thirsty, YOU ARE ALREADY DEHYDRATED! You need to employ a strategy that hydrates you so that you avoid ever reaching the point at which you feel thirsty.

Tips to stay hydrated:

- Drink a glass of water as soon as you've woken up. You've just been asleep for eight hours, hopefully, and we sweat while we're asleep so give yourself a top up
- Drink whenever possible during training (e.g. if you're doing a 90' row, stop for fifteen or twenty seconds every 15 minutes and have a couple of mouthfuls of fluid)
- Water is great to drink (preferably bottled) but also it's good to have some juice/squash for some of your fluid intake. You can make your own energy drink with juice and a pinch of salt. The cleaner the better, so if you can put fresh fruit juice in your bottle, or squeeze a lemon or lime into it rather than using synthetic squash then that would be better.
- When you're not training, continually sip water/squash/juice throughout the day
- Make sure you have your water bottle with you at all times – if you are without it for a few hours (e.g. watching a movie, or going to a lecture) then you've lost valuable time to replace fluids lost in training
- Avoid drinking for at least half an hour before and after as well as during a meal as it dilutes the digestive juices.

Other things that dehydrate you...

- Illness. You should drink extra when you're sick as the body uses more fluid when fighting infection
- Air conditioning or central heating systems – these will dry you out more than usual so if you're staying in a hotel with air conditioning or you have your heating turned up full blast or you work in an office with climate control then you need to up your fluid intake accordingly
- Alcohol: obviously it would be better if you didn't drink any alcohol but if you do, bear in mind that it dehydrates you and if you're having a few drinks, make sure you take in more water than normal between drinks and before bed.

How do you know if you're hydrated?

- Urine colour, and the best time to test this is your first pee of the morning as this standardises the testing. The lighter and clearer the urine, the more hydrated you are.
- Body weight: if it's consistent then it is likely that you are consistently hydrated

How do you know if you're dehydrated?

- Thirst
- Headache
- Struggling in training, your perceived effort will feel harder than normal
- Dark coloured urine in the morning

Extreme dehydration can lead to some serious medical problems (and ultimately death!) but even a small amount of dehydration will impair your aerobic performance. Even very small losses of fluid can lead to serious consequences. If you train while dehydrated your body will break down protein and you will lose muscle.

It's a good idea to weigh yourself before and after training to see how much fluid you are losing in a typical session. Weigh yourself in a set of training kit holding your full water bottle and then do your session, drinking as normal. Then hop back on the scales in the same kit (or preferably a dry version of the same kit if you have a spare lycra to hand, for example) with your empty bottle. This should tell you how much you are losing. If you have lost, say, two kilos, you should try and put three litres into your body over the next few hours. Roughly, you need to put back 1.5 times what you have lost. But this needs to be a steady sipping, not large amounts at once.