

Fluid Requirements for GAA Players

Exercise is thirsty work. Whenever you exercise you lose fluid, not only through sweating but also as water vapour in the air you expire. Fluid losses can be very high and if not replaced quickly, dehydration can rapidly set in. There is no safe level of dehydration, so athletes should keep well hydrated at all times by drinking frequently before, during and after exercise.

Dehydration: Excessive loss of water from the body

How do I know if I'm dehydrated?

- Thirst
- Fatigue
- Loss of Appetite
- Flushed skin
- Heat Intolerance
- Light Headaches
- Dark Urine

What will happen if I'm dehydrated?

Dehydration impairs performance capacity. If you are a little hydrated this will affect your ability to perform muscular work. The more dehydrated you are the more likely you will experience nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, poor performance, dizziness, laboured breathing, weakness and confusion.

Exercise becomes much harder as blood volume decreases and body temperature rises.

How much should I drink?

To avoid dehydration you should drink more than you want to at all times. Most peoples voluntarily drink about half of what they need. It is very important to increase the amount of fluid consumed on hot days.

**** Thirst is a poor indicator of your fluid needs, so you should drink before you are thirsty.***

Beforehand

- Prevention is better than cure, so make sure you are well hydrated before exercise.
- **Always carry a drinks bottle with you.**
- If you train in the evening, make sure you have had plenty of fluids throughout the day.
- If training in the morning time, make sure to drink plenty before u set out.

*** Take about 1 pint of isotonic drink one hour before training or competition**

During Exercise

- As soon as you start to exercise the body will start to lose fluid, and the more you sweat the more you need to drink.
- Drink as much as is comfortable for you.
- It may take getting used to, but you should aim to be taking the equivalent of a small glass every 15 minutes.
- Start slowly and build up gradually, practicing in each training session.
- Feelings of nausea, stomach discomfort and sickness can occur on drinking during exercise, but only if you drink after you become dehydrated
- If you drink plenty of fluid before you exercise , and carry on drinking small amounts during exercise to top up, you will not experience adverse symptoms.

After Exercise

- Drink freely immediately after exercise to replace your fluid losses.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty.
- Carbohydrate/energy containing drinks are useful.
- Avoid caffeine containing drinks e.g. coffee and cola beverages, as these may increase urine output contributing to dehydration.
- Recent research suggests that small amounts of protein can help in the recovery phase. The protein and carbohydrate content of milk make it an ideal post- exercise drink.

What type of fluid should I drink?

- Water
- Sports drinks (e.g. Gatorade, Lucozade Sport, Isotar)
- Home made energy/sugar solutions (See 'Active Energy' for recipes).

Water is a good fluid replacer. In exercise lasting less than one hour water is sufficient. In certain events e.g. team sports water can be consumed during the match with an isotonic/sports drink at half time to provide glucose/energy.

Isotonic drinks are the same concentration as body fluids and are absorbed at the same speed as water or perhaps slightly faster depending on exercise conditions. As well as providing fluids they also provide energy from sugar. These are good for exercise lasting longer than one hour.

Fruit juices / minerals are too concentrated for consumption before or during exercise and should only be consumed afterwards if at all.

Drink 1.5 – 2 litres of fluid daily. Drinks should be cool (not cold) as this allows you to drink more. Flavoured drinks are easier to drink.

Carbohydrate Snack (50g) (Before & After Training)

- 1 yogurt & 2 large bananas.
- 1 banana sandwich
- 1 bowl breakfast cereal with milk.
- 5 fig roll biscuits
- 2 muesli biscuits
- 6 thick rice cakes
- 1 large can tinned spaghetti
- 2 medium pancakes
- 1 ½ Mars bars
- 1 muffin & 2 glasses of milk.
- 4 slices of bread & spread (e.g. nutella, jam, honey)
- 1 pint of isotonic sports drink
- 1 pint dilutable fruit drink
- 6 cream crackers with jam/ honey/ marmalade.
- 1 large fruit scone with jam
- 1 bagel & 1 banana
- 1 large potato.
- Small bowl pasta / rice

Note: the quantities of each food item above are approximate values only and may depend on portion sizes. Brands etc.