HYDRATION

You’ve heard it week after week: Hydration, Hydration, and Hydration. Like the earth, water makes up 60-70% of your body’s total weight. It plays a part in virtually every physiological function. It enables chemical reactions to occur, it regulates body temperature, carries nutrients and oxygen to your cells, aids in riding the body of wastes, maintains blood volume and pressure, it lubricates and cushions joints, and protects vital organs. Sometimes we get so caught up in our lives that you sometimes forget how important it is to keep hydrated and the effects improper hydration can have on your health. Here are several tips and suggestions on proper hydration.

How much water is enough? We’ve all become accustomed to the recommendation to drink eight 8oz drinks of water per day. You may also have heard that if you only drink when thirsty you are already behind on fluids. The “8 by 8” guideline may oversimplify individual fluid needs. It may be an overestimation for a sedentary person or underestimate for an active person. Also, women may require less fluid (on average) than men. (This comes from the assumption that men are generally heavier than women, so they sweat more) Use this guideline to help determine your body's needs (body weight-in pounds x .31 = ounces. of water per day.)

It’s tempting not to drink when you don’t feel thirsty but dehydration can easily sneak up on you during your run/walk. You’re losing fluid and electrolytes during strenuous exercise which needs to be replaced in order to maintain good blood flow to the muscles, supplying them with sodium, potassium, and carbohydrates they need for fuel. Also, drinking fluids help regulate body temperature and keeps you cool. General rule of thumb is, you’ll want to drink around seven ounces of fluid every fifteen to twenty minutes during your run/walk. If you’re running/walking on a warm day, you may want to consume a bit more to compensate for excess fluids lost due to the heat.

Dehydration

Dehydration can occur when you don’t replace your body’s water losses. Water losses must be replaced since our bodies do not conserve or store water very well. Many attribute their daily dip in energy, difficulty in concentrating, and mid-afternoon headaches to mild dehydration. Dehydration during exercise sets off a set of negative chain reactions. When you start to run/walk, you lose water through sweat. Sweat comes from fluid in your blood, so your blood thickens as you sweat. This places stress on your cardiovascular system as your heart works harder to pump blood.

As your body temperature increases, you need more water. Yet, dehydration inhibits absorption of electrolytes which normally help absorb water. Our body’s ability to balance fluid losses is thus compromised, causing heat related illness. Here are some
early signs of dehydration: increased thirst; nausea; dry mouth; headache; reduced urine output, (with dark yellow urine), or lightheadedness. Serious dehydration can lead to cramps, chills and disorientation.

Here are the three most common heat related issues runners/walkers face.

1. **HEAT CRAMPS**
   Usually a loss of electrolytes and accumulation of lactic acid in the muscles.
   Conditions: Muscle cramps and/or spasms, heavy sweating, normal body temperature.

2. **HEAT EXHAUSTION**
   Intense exercise in a hot, humid condition and loss of electrolytes.
   Conditions: Profuse sweating, possible drop in blood pressure (less than 90 systolic, the top number), normal or slightly elevated body temperature, lightheadedness, nausea, vomiting, decreased coordination, possible fainting.

3. **HEAT STROKE**
   **This is a medical emergency, call 911!** Intense exercise in a hot, humid condition, older age, dehydration, obesity, wearing heavy clothing, running in the heat when you have an infection or fever, certain drugs such as amphetamines, diuretics, beta blockers, cardiovascular disease, poor acclimatization, high blood pressure.
   Conditions: High body temperature (106 or higher), lack of sweating characterized by dry, red skin, altered consciousness.

**REMEMBER**—The best way to monitor your hydration levels is to check the color of your urine. It should become pale yellow to clear as you near full hydration. (This can be affected if you are taking certain vitamins and/or medications known to alter urines appearance) If it resembles apple juice in color it is a sign of dehydration and you should consume more fluids.

**Let’s get Technical**

Remember we all lose water through sweat at a different rate depending upon our size, environmental temperature, and intensity of workout. To find your individual water replacement requirements, weigh yourself before and after several workouts and then average your weight loss. But remember the weight you have lost is just water only.

A 1 pound weight loss means you’ve sweated 1 pint or 2 cups of fluid. Therefore, if you lose ½ pound during a 30 minute run/walk, your body requires you to replace 1 cup per 30 minutes of running/walking.

So be sure to drink up before, during and after your workout to insure your body’s best performance and to avoid dehydration.