

WELLNESS ARTICLES

HYDRATION MATTERS

Replacing fluids during exercise ensures healthy hydration

While training for a cycling event or a race, drinking the right amount of fluid before, during and after your workouts will have a direct, positive impact on your performance. But, because everyone is different, there is not one answer to “How much water should I drink?”

Know your goal

The overall goal is to minimize dehydration without drinking too much. Some say that an adequate amount is about 13 cups of total beverages a day for men and about nine cups a day for women. Others will go by the “8 by 8” rule of drinking eight eight-ounce glasses of fluid a day. You may also need to increase your total fluid intake depending on how active you are, the climate you live in or your health status.

Replace as you run

Dehydration results when you fail to adequately replace fluid you’ve lost through sweating. Drinking water is the only way to rehydrate and cool your body from the inside out, so be sure to drink water rather than pouring it over your head. Finally, rehydrate after exercise by drinking enough to replace fluid losses during exercise.

Other ways to help with hydration

- Leave salt in its shaker. Maintaining a low sodium level will help your body maximize its fluids.
- Cut out the caffeine. Caffeinated sodas, regular coffee, and caffeine-infused energy drinks and gels might make you feel great temporarily, but could eventually hinder your performance.
- Drink when it’s hot or cold. You sweat in cold weather as well as warm weather. So don’t be fooled by a cool forecast – it’s just as important to hydrate when it’s chilly (as it’s been the past couple of years during Marathon Weekend).
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Watch for signs

Dehydration can occur in virtually every physical activity. Be alert for signs of dehydration, including:

- Increased thirst and flushed skin
- Premature fatigue and decreased exercise capacity
- Increased body temperature, and faster breathing and pulse rate

So although no single hydration formula fits everyone, the more you know more about your body and its need for fluids, the better you’ll be able to decide how to stay properly hydrated.

The information provided is for educational purposes only. It is not intended as medical advice. Always consult your doctor for appropriate health advice and guidance, including prior to starting a new diet or exercise program.

STAYING HEALTHY IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Add a wellness exam to your training schedule

The healthier you are, the better your performance. So, as you train for your cycling event, it's a good idea to have a wellness exam. There are simple tests that your doctor can do to help you learn more about any health conditions you might have – or are at risk for developing. With this important wellness screening information, you'll be better able to understand your health, and your doctor will be able to help you manage any health conditions more effectively.

Now that you understand the importance of regular wellness screenings, what do you do next?

Have an annual wellness exam

- The first thing you should do is schedule regular medical checkups with your doctor. Work together and get the wellness screenings you need.
- In addition to understanding your current health, your doctor can share preventive information so you know what to watch out for and take actions to ensure your health is the best it can be.

All marketplace health plans, and many other plans, must cover wellness screenings, including your annual wellness exam, without charging you a copay or coinsurance. This is true even if you haven't met your yearly deductible. Call your doctor or your health care plan to learn more about the wellness screenings that are available to you at no additional cost.

Stay up to date on screenings

Use this checklist to determine the screening recommendations that are right for you.

- A tetanus-diphtheria (Td) shot every 10 years and a pneumonia vaccine once for people aged 65 or older and for those with chronic conditions such as diabetes, lung disease or heart disease. Other immunizations depend on age and occupation such as health care workers and members of the military, as well as on your general health.
- Cholesterol screening for all men ages 35 and older, or ages 20-35 if risk factors and all women ages 45 and older, or ages 20-45 if risk factors.
- Blood pressure test every one to two years, or as your doctor advises.
- Diabetes testing as your doctor advises.
- Some type of screening test for colon cancer such as a flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy at ages 50 and older.
- Well-woman exam, which includes clinical breast exam (and annual mammogram for women over age 40 and those considered high risk for breast cancer), pelvic exam and pap smear.
- Hearing and vision screening for people ages 65 and older, or as your physician advises.

You're working hard to prepare. Don't let poor health take you out of the road

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FUEL YOUR BODY WITH A HEALTHY DIET

Cigna applauds your efforts to reach your full athletic potential and, because we know that cycling demands a lot of energy, we wanted to offer a few nutritional tips to get you started on the right foot and help you stay energized during training.

Get a head start with a healthy breakfast. If you exercise in the morning, make sure to get up early enough to eat breakfast. Most of the energy you acquired from the previous night's dinner will be used up by morning and your blood sugar may be low. If you plan to exercise within an hour after breakfast, eat a lighter meal or drink something to raise your blood sugar. Emphasize carbohydrates for maximum energy.

Check your portions. Be careful not to overdo it when it comes to how much you eat before exercising. Eating too much can leave you feeling sluggish, or worse, upset your stomach. Eating too little may not give you the energy you need to feel strong throughout your workout.

Pack a snack. For snacks before and during training, do what works best for you. Snacks eaten right before training may not provide you with substantial added energy, but they can help keep your blood sugar up and prevent distracting hunger pains. A healthy snack is especially important if you plan a workout several hours after a meal.

Refuel after you exercise. To help your muscles recover, eat a meal that contains both protein and carbohydrates within two hours of your exercise session. If you're not hungry after your workout, drink juice or a sports drink to provide replenishing carbohydrates.

Drink up. You need adequate fluids before, during and after exercise to help prevent dehydration. Water is generally the best way to replace lost fluids. However, if you're exercising for more than 60 minutes, consider having a sports drink to help maintain your body's electrolyte balance.

The bottom line is to eat right to finish strong!

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