

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

Being appropriately hydrated contributes to optimal health and exercise performance. The term used for normal or optimal hydration is “euhydration” and is the condition in which athletes should start all of their training sessions and competitions. Dehydration, on the other hand, is a decrease in total body water and leads to hypohydration, which is when fluid losses exceed fluid intake.

Research suggests that a 2% dehydration level in the body can contribute to a 10% decrease in performance, and as dehydration gets worse, performance is likely to continue to decline. Athletes can begin to experience signs and symptoms of dehydration, like thirst and general discomfort, with as little as a 2% loss in body weight. These are typically followed by flushed skin, weariness, cramps, and apathy.

When an athlete begins to experience greater fluid loss (more than 2% body mass loss), dizziness, headache, vomiting, nausea, heat sensations on the head or neck, chills, and dyspnea may start to occur.

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Early/Moderate Warning Signs:	Severe Warning Signs:
Thirst	Difficulty swallowing
Excessive sweating	Muscle spasms
Tiredness/fatigue	Sunken eyes
Flushed skin	Shriveled, numb skin
Headache and dizziness	Sleepiness, clumsiness, dizziness
Nausea	Painful urination or not urinating
Small amounts of dark urine	Rapid heartbeat
Sticky mucus membranes in mouth	Rapid breathing

Tips to Stay Hydrated

- Carry a water bottle with you throughout the day to ensure proper hydration during school and other extracurricular activities.
- Check the color of your urine before starting exercise; the goal is for it to be pale yellow to clear.
- Bring multiple bottles of water and/or sports drink with you to practice and competitions.
- Be sure to follow the pre-, during-, and post-exercise hydration recommendations.
- If you struggle with muscle cramps, add extra electrolytes to your fuel and hydration plan.
- If you start to experience any of the early signs of dehydration, stop exercise, cool off, and drink fluid.
 - » Ingestion of cold beverages (41° F) may help reduce core temperature and thus improve performance in the heat.
 - » The presence of flavor in a beverage may increase palatability and voluntary fluid intake.

