

FLUID REPLACEMENT

Water is the most important nutrient to a swimmer. Body temperature increases during exercise and water cools the body. It is very dangerous to limit water intake. During periods of hot weather, high volume and/or high intensity training, swimmers need to be even more conscious of their fluid intake. Studies have shown that sweat water losses, of as little as 2% of body weight, will result in dehydration and the swimmer's performance will suffer. The best way to prevent dehydration is to maintain body fluid levels by taking fluids before, during and after a workout or race. Listed below are some guidelines a swimmer can follow to prevent dehydration:

1. Weigh in and weigh out, without clothes, before and after exercise.
2. For every pound lost during exercise, the swimmer should drink two cups of fluid.
3. Any beverage consumed should be cool (45-55 degrees F).
4. Drink 2 ½ cups of water two hours before exercising.
5. Never restrict fluids during exercise.
6. Avoid drinking beverages that contain caffeine as caffeine will increase urine output, increasing water loss.

The athlete can become dehydrated from losing only a few pounds of water as sweat. The first symptoms of dehydration (initial warning signs to the athlete) are thirst, chills, clammy skin, throbbing heartbeat and nausea. The athlete who allows dehydration to continue will experience cramps, headache, dizziness, shortness of breath, and dryness in the mouth. Symptoms of extreme dehydration are hallucinations, visual problems, deafness and kidney failure.