



## Hydration is critical to performance

*Information for this article was provided by Aurora Sports Medicine Institute. For more information, call the Sports Medicine Hotline™ at 219-7776 or 1-800-219-7776 or log on to [www.Aurora.org/SportsMedicine](http://www.Aurora.org/SportsMedicine)*

Hydration is a key component of athletic performance. Even a small reduction of 5% in body fluids can affect endurance, reaction time and concentration. As an athlete, following proper hydration guides can help maintain optimal performance levels.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends drinking 16 ounces, or two cups of fluid, two hours before exercising. Fluid intake during exercise should be 5 to 10 ounces, or one cup, every 15 to 20 minutes.

Drink at least one cup every 15 to 20 minutes for two hours after exercising. The level of activity, environmental conditions and rate of sweat all need to be considered when determining hydration.

Research has shown both water and sport drinks are excellent sources for hydration. In exercise sessions less than an hour, water is just as effective. However, certain sport drinks containing 6% to 8 % carbohydrates have been shown to be more effective than water in maintaining performance levels for over an hour. And sport drinks with 6% to 8 % carbohydrates tend to be less upsetting to the stomach and are quickly absorbed by the body.

An easy way to determine if you need fluid is to check the color of your urine. If it is pale yellow or clear, you are well-hydrated. If the color is darker, you're probably dehydrated. Do not rely solely on thirst as an indicator of dehydration – thirst is an emergency warning signal. By the time you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. And surprisingly, once you've quenched your thirst, you may not be fully rehydrated.

By maintaining proper hydration, you can improve performance and decrease the chance for injury. Adequate fluid consumption is an easy way to make your exercise sessions more productive.