

Hydration

Hydration is just as important as food intake before and after exercise. Two hours before exercise, athletes should consume 16 ounces of water or a sports drink to help hydrate them ahead of time.

Thirty minutes before exercise, athletes should intake another eight ounces to prepare themselves for activity.

During activity, fluids should be available for athletes at all times. Because athletes are sweating out important fluids, they must replenish them by drinking eight ounces every 20 minutes. If players are engaging in short activity, of 30 seconds or less, they are at a high risk for dehydration because of the intensity of the work.

Long-term activity of 30 minutes or more requires periodic rehydration, such as the eight ounces every 20 minutes just suggested.

If an activity lasts more than 40 minutes, water is not sufficient to rehydrate the body. The nutrient loss through sweat requires a sports drink to replenish electrolytes.

Many athletes will prefer not to drink during activity or will feel ill directly after intense exercise. All athletes must drink adequate liquids before, during, and after activity to avoid dehydration, which can lead to nausea, dizziness, and fatigue.

After activity, athletes should continue to intake fluids.

At this point, fluids can be the normal amount the athlete would consume with a meal and through the rest of the day.

A total of 64 ounces of fluid is a minimum for athletes, though more is suggested. A good test of proper hydration is a urine test. Athletes should pass clear urine, not dark or with a restricted flow.

Encourage athletes to pay attention to their own needs, as all athletes will have slightly different needs. If an athlete feels uncomfortable, light-headed, or otherwise abnormal, they should come to you for counseling.

As fluid intake levels will change based on environmental effects, pay attention to the outside influences affecting fluid needs in athletes.