



Pros and Cons of Sports Drinks

Water may be just as beneficial when sweating

Sometimes the sound of Lemon-Lime or Gatorade Frost sound better than plain old water. But before you reach for that sports drink to quench your thirst, there are a few things you should know.

Sports Drinks vs. Water

Every commercial for sports drinks emphasizes the benefits of replenishing electrolytes that you sweat out during exercise. If you are the professional athlete in that commercial then that is probably beneficial, but for many others that is not the case.

Studies have shown that the loss of electrolytes is not extremely prevalent unless you are sweating profusely for over 60 minutes. Until that time, water is able to replenish what the body loses in sweat.

No excess weight

Another reason you may not be so eager to grab a sports drink is on the label. A 12-ounce bottle of Gatorade Rain contains 75 calories, 21 grams of sugar and 165 milligrams of sodium. A report from the University of California at Berkeley's Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health warned that students who drink one 20-ounce sports drink every day for a year may gain about 13 pounds.

Keeping your teeth healthy

One thing many people don't think about while drinking is their teeth. A study done at the University of Iowa shows that the common sports drink, Gatorade, erodes teeth faster than Coke. Researchers dunked teeth in test tubes filled with regular Coke, Diet Coke, Gatorade, Red Bull, or 100 percent apple juice.

Every five hours, the researchers refreshed the beverages. After 25 hours, they examined the teeth with a microscope. All of the teeth showed erosion, but different beverages had significantly different effects.

On the enamel, Gatorade was significantly more corrosive than Red Bull and Coke. Red Bull and Coke, in turn, were significantly more corrosive than Diet Coke and apple juice.

What is in sports drinks?

After looking at the label on sports drinks a little more, the unsettling fact arises that the three main ingredients they contain are water, high fructose corn syrup, and salt.

High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is the number one source of calories in the US. It is the most prevalent sweetener used in foods and beverages today, and has been clearly linked to the rise in obesity and metabolic syndrome.

In addition, a 20-ounce bottle of Gatorade contains approximately 275 milligrams of sodium, almost 12 percent of the recommended daily allowance for people ages 14 to 18. Already, more than 75 percent of children consume more than the recommended 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day, according to the Institute of Medicine.



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If you are going to drink a sports drink, remember these helpful tips

For exercise or physical exertion lasting less than 1 hour:

- ☆ Plain water works just fine and is cost effective.
- ☆ If the flavor of a sports drink is more appealing, that's fine to drink, too. Just remember, sports drinks are not **calorie or cost-free**.

For extended periods of exercise or for physical exertion lasting 1 hour or more:

- ☆ Sports drinks containing carbohydrates and electrolytes help prevent dehydration and
- ☆ restore important minerals lost through perspiration, and they produce better hydration than water.

Maintaining Proper Hydration

Keep water or a sports drink within easy reach at all times during athletic activity and workouts. Drink frequently during activity, but be sure to drink before and after activity as well. When people feel thirsty, the body is telling them that is is already dehydrated. Drinking even before the body feels thirsty is the best way to prevent dehydration damage. Drink an average of 4-6 ounces of liquid every 15 minutes during intense periods of activity.

Sports drinks vs. water comes down to the length and intensity of an athlete or exerciser's workout; water is never a poor choice, but there are benefits to supplementing a workout with some varieties of sports drinks as well. More important than selecting between the two is maintaining proper hydration before, during and after exercise.



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