



## Sports Drinks Facts

### What's wrong with sports drinks?

Sports drinks are sugary drinks in disguise, cleverly marketed as something healthy. With 9 teaspoons of sugar per 600ml bottle, they may in fact, undo all your hard work and do your health harm.

9 teaspoons of sugar is one and half times the daily recommendation for added sugar, which adds excess kilojoules (calories) in your diet that in turn can lead to weight gain and other health problems. Sports drinks also contain food acids, which combined with sugar make these drinks highly acidic, leading to dental enamel erosion and tooth decay.



### What is the best way to recover and rehydrate after exercise?



**Water is the best way to rehydrate** after a gym class or basketball game; it's free and comes without the chemicals and 9 teaspoons of sugar.

It is essential to stay hydrated with water during a workout session. Water is vital for your body to maintain a healthy temperature as well as to replace any lost fluids from sweating. If you do not consume enough water, your exercise performance, and health, can be adversely affected.

You can **fuel your recovery** with a simple nutritious snack like a banana, glass of milk, tuna or avocado sandwich.

### What's really in a sports drink?

There are three main components that make up a sports drink.

#### 1. Carbohydrate (the sugars, sucrose and glucose).

Most sports drinks contain 36g (9 teaspoons) per 600ml bottle. This is one and a half times the World Health Organisation's daily recommendation for added sugar for adults and kids.

#### 2. Electrolytes: sodium (aka salt) and potassium.

Sodium helps the body to 'hold onto' fluid more effectively. It also makes you feel thirstier – which may actually make you drink more than you need, loading up on unnecessary sugar. In truth, most of us already consume too much salt and losses through sweat won't negatively impact our performance or health. Potassium can be found in many simple snacks that come without the added sugar and chemicals, like a banana or a glass of milk. Other nutritious foods that are high in potassium include dark leafy greens, potatoes, beans, fish, yoghurt, mushrooms and avocados.



### 3. Food chemicals: acids, artificial colouring and flavouring.

Sports drinks contain these chemicals to aid palatability and stability of the product. Food acids combined with sugar make sports drinks highly acidic which can contribute to dental enamel erosion and tooth decay.

### What about sugar free sports drinks?

Sugar free sports drinks, which are sweetened artificially, are promoted as an alternative to regular sports drinks. In truth, artificially sweetened sports drinks still pose problems to our health; they are acidic to our teeth and are only recommended in small serving sizes; 375ml or less. Artificially sweetened sports drinks only come in a large 600ml bottle.

Additionally, they're super sweet and encourage you to crave more sweet foods. Artificially sweetened drinks of any size are not recommended for children.

### Is a sports drink ever beneficial?

For most of us in a gym setting, basketball game and for everyday exercise, water is the best and cheapest option to prevent dehydration and help you perform at your best.

Sports drinks may be useful during high intensity exercise that lasts longer than 90 minutes, by providing optimal fluid and fuel delivery. Sports drinks may allow athletes to perform for longer and more effectively in training and competition, by providing energy to working muscles and the brain, when eating isn't an option. For example, during triathlons, long distance running and cycling.

### Sports Drinks: the bottom line

Sports drinks are sugary drinks in disguise, cleverly marketed as something healthy. Despite what sports drinks brands and the sports stars who promote them might tell you, for most of us sports drinks provide unnecessary sugar and salt. We would actually benefit *more* from drinking water and eating a simple snack, like a banana, than a sweet-flavoured drink filled with artificial substances.

In reality, water is all we need to rehydrate and perform at our best.

### References

Rethink Sugary Drinks 2017, *Facts*, Cancer Council Victoria, <<http://www.rethinksugarydrink.org.au/facts>>.

World Health Organization 2015, *Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children*, Geneva: World Health Organization, <[http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/sugars\\_intake/en/](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/sugars_intake/en/)>