

Have an Hydration Game Plan

July is one of the hottest months every year we have in Texas and we need to start concerning ourselves with staying hydrated. This is no more important than with our young athletes getting ready for fall sports. When someone is dehydrated, they lose their performance edge and are unable to play their best. This is because dehydration can slow you down, prevent your body from cooling, impair skills and mental awareness, and increase your risk of heat illness such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You only need to lose about 2% of your body weight in fluid to affect your performance. By the time you are thirsty, you are likely already dehydrated.

Fortunately, you can prevent dehydration by having a plan to replace fluids you lose while exercising, and by knowing the warning signs of dehydration. Warning signs include noticeable thirst, muscle cramps, weakness, decreased performance, difficulty paying attention, headaches, nausea, fatigue, and lightheaded feeling or dizziness. If continues then a more serious condition like heat exhaustion and heat stroke can occur.

Staying hydrated means that you maintain your body's fluid balance. This means that you take in drinking as much as you lose out in sweat. It is important to know how much to drink to replace what is being lost. The best way to start is to weigh yourself prior to and after exercise. If you lose more than 2% of your body weight than drink more fluid. A 2% loss in a 150-pound person would be 3 pounds, in a 200 pound person would be 4 pounds. Despite popular belief, weight loss in an exercise session is water loss, not fat loss. Make sure you replace the fluid lost.

There are a lot of choices to choose from to drink while exercising and many people use water, which is fine. There are numerous sports drinks also which have become popular for several reasons. Most have flavor which encourages you to drink, some contain carbohydrates that fuel working muscles, and electrolytes to help replace what you lose in sweat. Drink before, during at least every 15-20 minutes, and after exercise. Replace about 150% of your weight loss over 2-4 hours after your workout, which should help you replace the water, body salts and energy stores you have lost.

By all means, if you feel you are becoming dehydrated than speak up. You cannot work through dehydration or tough it out. Here is to the good health of all are athletes, and good luck to all of our local teams.