

Make Hydration a Goal



ACTIVE KIDS NEED ADEQUATE FLUIDS for a healthy, well-functioning body. Proper hydration is important for their energy level, concentration and physical endurance.



Before a practice or a game, kids should drink about 12 to 16 ounces of fluid. During activity, kids should drink every 20 minutes or so—about a half cup for kids who weigh less than 90 pounds, and about a cup if they weigh more. If the weather is really hot or humid, they might need even more liquid.

WHEN WATER ISN'T ENOUGH

Plain water is always a perfectly good choice, but many kids prefer drinks with a little flavor. Parents are faced with a variety of juice drinks, vitamin-fortified waters and energy drinks on the market, making it difficult to choose the best beverage for kids to meet their fluid needs.

LOOK AT THE LABEL

When evaluating beverages, a good place to start is by reading the nutrition facts label. For instance, sodas or fruit drinks are often high in calories and sugar, and low on nutrients. Some energy drinks have a combination of caffeine and sugar, designed to give a quick spike in energy. Kids might be drinking the adult equivalent of a few cups of coffee, which could make them jittery or cause an upset stomach.

So what should you look for? It's a good idea to check labels for electrolytes such as sodium and potassium, which are salts that get lost in perspiration. Also, look for drinks with less than 100 calories per 8-ounce serving, since higher calories usually means more sugar.

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

How do you know if your kids are dehydrated? One way to check hydration level is to note the color of the urine. "People who are optimally hydrated should urinate every one to two hours," says Luigi Gratton, M.D., M.P.H. "And tell your kids that their urine should look more like lemonade, and less like apple juice. Darker color usually means more concentrated urine, an indication that kids need to increase fluid intake."

Watch your child for other signs and symptoms of dehydration during exercise, such as muscle cramping, or feeling light-headed, nauseated, headachy or faint.

Remember, proper hydration is important for kids' athletic performance, energy and overall health.