

HEAT WAVE HYDRATION TIPS

Contributed by Mandy Enright, MS, RDN, RYT

Summer is in full swing, and temps are rising. It's especially important to stay hydrated during the dog days of summer. The heat can cause excess sweating, leading to a loss of water and dehydration. Dehydration can make us feel fatigued, unfocused, and moody, while physically causing muscle cramping or risk of heat stroke. The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recommend that men should have 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluid per day and women should have 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) per day.

Here are some tips for keeping cool when the temps go up.

Drink Up!

Drink water frequently throughout the day. Even if you're not usually a water drinker, always keep a refillable bottle or water glass near you and refill it as often as possible. Set a goal for how many bottles you need to drink per day and create a tracking system to make sure you're meeting your daily water drinking goal. Aim to drink a glass of water per hour to get your daily needs. Try a hydration app such as Daily Water Tracker, Hydro Coach, Water Minder, or Aqualert for reminders, tracking, and motivation.

Another simple way to increase your intake is to drink your beverages through a straw. You will consume more fluids quicker through a straw versus just sipping. Consider a reusable straw or a water bottle with a straw attachment to increase your sips.

Best Hydration Sources

Water is an optimal source of hydration, but it's not the only option. Other sources of fluids include:

- Seltzer or sparkling water
- Lowfat or nonfat dairy (or non-dairy alternative)
- Unsweetened and/or low-caffeinated tea
- Fruits and vegetables – eating them raw will provide the greatest source of hydration

Get Your Electrolytes

Electrolytes are minerals that help maintain fluid levels. These vital minerals include potassium, sodium, and chloride. Excessive sweating causes a loss of salts and water, so it's important to make sure you're replenishing these key minerals with your fluids and foods:

- Fruits and vegetables are an excellent way to replenish your electrolytes in addition to providing a source of hydration.
- Eating salty foods can help increase your fluid intake. Just be mindful not to overdo it on the sodium.
- Electrolyte-infused drinks or flavor-enhancers can also be a source of electrolytes.
- Check out the homemade sports drink recipe shared below for a DIY option that cuts out the excessive sugars and food colorings found in store-bought drinks.

FYI – unless you are exercising or playing sports for more than one hour or exercising in extreme heat, sports drinks are not necessary. Stick with water to replenish your fluids.



Hydration Zappers

Not every beverage is ideal for hydration. In fact, many beverages can lead to dehydration. Avoid these if you're looking to stay hydrated:

- Sugary drinks like juices, soda, sports drinks, or energy drinks high in added sugars.
- Limit caffeinated beverages to 2 cups in the extreme heat.
- Alcoholic beverages may sound refreshing, but they are a diuretic that can increase dehydration.
- Sugary or spicy foods, which can cause your body temperature to increase.

Flavor Infusions

If you find plain water to be challenging to drink and need some flavor in your beverages, add fruit, vegetables, or herbs to naturally flavor your water without adding sugar. Berries, citrus fruits, melon, cucumber, mint, rosemary, and basil all infuse fluids very well. Using frozen fruit will also help keep your beverage cool while adding flavor. Start with a base of water, sparkling water, or unsweetened iced tea. Then, try adding these combos:

- Strawberry or watermelon and basil
- Blueberries, lemon, and mint
- Orange slices and rosemary
- Cucumber, lime, and mint
- Blackberry, raspberry, and lemon

Fruit smoothies are another delicious way to get fluids by combining fruit with dairy or non-dairy milk.

Another tip is to freeze fruit and herbs in ice cube trays with water to make flavored ice cubes and add to your beverages for delicious flavor. Try an infusion bottle if you want fruit flavor without the texture.

Make Your Own Sports Drink

Sports drinks contain the following key elements: fluid for hydration; carbs to replenish energy; and electrolytes to rebalance body fluids. Cut back on the sugar and additives by making your own sports drink with this simple recipe.

In a large pitcher, combine:

- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup hot water
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 ½ cups cold water

Yield: 1 quart (4 cups)

Nutrition information per cup: 50 calories, 12 grams carbohydrate, 110 milligrams sodium



Mandy Enright MS, RDN, RYT, is a Registered Dietitian, Yoga Instructor, and Corporate Wellness Expert, as well as main content contributor for Wellness Concepts. Mandy is a featured presenter, both virtually and onsite near her home in Neptune, NJ.

