



## Ask a Nutritionist

by Tara Postnikoff

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### Q: What adjustments should runners make when training and racing on hot days?

**A:** When training and racing in the hot, humid months of summer, proper hydration is especially important. Take the time to plan your hydration needs from start to finish, to maximize your health and performance. It's not always possible to rely on your thirst mechanism as an indicator of hydration. Also, the amount of fluid you lose through sweat will be affected by temperature, humidity, your individual sweat rate, and the length and intensity of your run.

#### Pre-Run

Start all your runs fully hydrated so you can train properly and minimize the risk of dehydration. Dehydration will elevate your heart rate and core body temperature beyond optimal levels, which will lead to reduction in performance during your run and a slower recovery. Consume 2 to 4 cups of fluid, 2 to 4 hours before your run. You may need additional carbohydrates and/or electrolytes depending on the duration, intensity and weather conditions.

#### During your Run

If you run without water, you risk placing unnecessary stress on your tissues and organs, which can lead to early fatigue, poor performance and increased injury risk. Follow recommended hydration guidelines for all runs. For hot, humid conditions, make sure you are consuming at least 500 mL to 1 litre of water per hour of running. You should also take in 250 mg of sodium per hour, to ensure you don't dilute your blood sodium levels with excess water. Drink at regular intervals (every 15 to 20 minutes) during your training and racing to maintain the right balance.

#### Post-Run

Consume approximately 2 cups of water for every pound lost during your run. If you gained weight during your run, then you likely over-consumed water. Some people can benefit from added electrolytes post-run especially if they are consuming large amounts of water.

#### Other Considerations

Use the colour of your urine as an indicator of low hydration: it should be pale yellow, or the colour of straw. Hydration during humid conditions can be tricky, since your body's ability to cool itself is hampered by the fact that sweat evaporates less. As a result, you will need to drink more to compensate for the excess heat. However, too much water can lead to diluted blood sodium levels (hyponatremia), so in humid conditions you can add small amounts of sodium to your water (around 250 to 500 mg per litre of fluids consumed).

Food digestion interferes with blood flow to working muscles, so avoid large meals before running in the heat. Lastly, avoid alcoholic beverages close to workout time, as they have a diuretic effect. **RR**

