

As the weather is finally warming up I have been thinking about hydration, and how important it is every day and not just when we are exercising.

To help you gain concept of how important water is to us you may be surprised to know that water makes up 60% of our body mass. It has several key functions: •Water acts as a lubricant that bathes the tissues. It helps to make up blood plasma, which transports and delivers nutrients to the rest of the body as well as getting rid of waste products from the kidneys.

- It helps to get rid of excess body heat during exercise (in the form of sweat! Ew! I know but this is the most effective way of cooling the body)
- It also helps to maintain blood pressure.

Water balance during exercise becomes very important. Dehydration of just 2% of bodyweight can have a huge impact on our performance. This can make us tire a lot sooner, causing the heart rate to increase further making us feel very hot.

Water also contains electrolytes and minerals such as sodium, chloride, magnesium, potassium, fluoride and calcium. So drinking adequate water can contribute to our intake of these important nutrients, a lot of which can be lost during exercise as we sweat.

Our body is constantly assessing our fluid balance and responds by stimulating thirst and regulation of fluid loss through the kidney (meaning that we tend to wee less). Thirst though can mean that the body has already become dehydrated, so it is important to drink water on a regular basis so that fluid balance is maintained.

So what can we do to prevent dehydration. Well I am sure that we have all heard before the recommendation for 8 glasses a day. We this does stand true, but what about for those of us who are taking part in some form of exercise?

On top of our 8 glasses a day the recommendation from the American College for Sports Medicine for active people is to drink 400-600ml (approx 2-3 glasses worth) of fluid 2 hours before exercise. You may need to increase this slightly in hot weather.

During exercise the recommendation is 150-350ml every 15-20 minutes. I know this sound a lot and may be hard to consume, but you should be aware of your ideal goal.

After exercise the amount of water we needs depends on how much sweat we have produced. For every lb of weight lost we need to drink 450-700ml. This is a lot and not easy to measure, so just make sure you do drink plenty at regular intervals for up to 2 hours after, and remember if you feel thirsty you may be dehydrated.

Tip! Cold water tends to quench thirst more than warm water and you are more likely to drink more of it. The same goes for flavoured drinks (but remember about the sugar content). If you find it hard to drink water look for a flavoured one, but again be sure to check how much sugar has been put into it. Pure fruit juices are also good and easy to drink (not before or during exercise though) as they can provide us with vitamins.

Sports drinks are very effective, they replace lost electrolytes and carbohydrates, and are easily retained by the body. However they are very high in sugars and ultimately calories. I would save these type of drinks for athletes who require them to improve performance and we should stick to our fat free water!

Your wee is a good indication of your hydration level. If it is a strong yellow, you need more water.

On a final note, did you see GMTV last Friday, they were looking a bottled v's tap water and a survey showed that most people could not tell the difference. The quality of tap water is excellent, especially here in the north of the country. However especially for us exercisers bottled water does have it's benefits as it is often more convenient. If you do drink bottled water be sure to recycle your plastic bottles. Did you know 50 glasses of tap water cost just 1p. A hell of a lot cheaper than any bottled water.

I you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter just send me an email to my address at the top of the letter. (I'm on my green mission again to help save the planet!)

As well as teaching aerobics classes I also have a degree in sports science and am a qualified massage therapist. Practising Swedish massage techniques. If you would be interested in any personal training or massage treatments please contact me for prices and further information.

Your feedback is important to me. Please speak to me in person or via email with any comments or suggestions for future articles. Love Emma xxx

