



Choosing Your Hydration Drinks

by Joanna K. Chodorowska

Summer here and some days you think your kids (or you) will just melt in that summer heat! If you do not take some care in helping their small bodies cope with heat and humidity, you might have a child that is exhausted and lifeless on the couch. Sometimes water is not enough!

When looking at what to do to combat the summer heat, we need to look at the overall eating plan too, so we include foods rich in electrolytes and minerals. This includes dark and leafy greens, celery and celeriac, sea vegetables, and green vegetables which are high in calcium and magnesium. Also include bananas, sweet potatoes, and coconut water, all high in potassium. Does the food you eat offer naturally found electrolytes?

How do you know you need more salts and minerals? Do you crave salty beverages or foods? Do you feel light-headed or nauseous in heat? Do you feel like you are melting? Are your muscles tight or crampy? Are your joints stiff? These can all be signs of dehydration starting. You don't want to just take in plain water, as that can dilute already low electrolyte stores. If you get diarrhea or have to urinate a lot, that can actually be your body riding excess liquids to concentrate the levels of electrolytes naturally. So at this point you will want to stop exercising, and get some electrolyte-rich liquids into your system; and plenty of salt, preferably sea salt. (But the store bought options might do more harm than good. Look for Himalayan sea salt or Celtic sea salt.)

So what are some options for electrolyte replacement drinks available in stores? Coconut water is naturally high in potassium, but not in sea salt. Sometimes just a packet of

sea salt will do the trick! But the store bought Gatorades, Pedialyte and artificially flavored and colored sports drinks only have sodium and potassium; they also have too much sugar usually from high fructose corn syrup which blocks your body's ability to absorb electrolytes. They provide limited electrolytes with plenty of calories (or if choosing low calorie, you get chemically loaded artificial sweeteners – which do not boost performance). Knudsen makes an electrolyte drink which is low in sugar. Some local bike shops and my company, Nutrition in Motion, carry Hammer Nutrition HEED powder or FIZZ tablets. The HEED (High Energy Electrolyte Drink) is sweetened with stevia and xylitol but has no artificial colors and like the FIZZ (no calories) has the complete electrolyte profile. NUUN is a fizzy tablet but has the artificial sweeteners. Infinit Nutrition now has an electrolyte drink made just for kids called :2-D1 but only available online.

There are plenty of options for hydrating and making sure you don't melt in the summer. Eating the right combination of electrolyte and mineral rich foods will help your body naturally acclimate to heat and humidity easier. But when really hot, you will want to add some concentrated electrolytes to give you the lasting power and not melt in the heat! Happy summer! **LL**

For more information on sports nutrition related topics, please visit Nutrition in Motion at www.nutrition-in-motion.net. Joanna K. Chodorowska, BA, NC, TPTH is a sports nutrition coach helping athletes improve their performance, reaction time, and faster recovery using real foods. Joanna provides her clients with realistic, real food options that fit into their busy lives.