What Should I Drink When I am Active?

Active people need to drink enough fluid to prevent fatigue, maintain good reflexes, control body heat, and speed up recovery. It is important for athletes to choose healthy drinks to help them stay well hydrated throughout the entire day.

Drink	Before Activity	During Activity	After Activity	Key Points
Water	☑	☑	☑	Drink throughout the day. Best choice before and after activity. Best choice during activity unless sweating a lot for more than an hour.
Milk	☑	☒	☑	Choose unflavoured milk or soy milk most often. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
100% Fruit Juice	▽	▽ *	▽	Limit to 125 mL (½ cup) per day. *Can be used to make a homemade sports drink. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Sports Drink	☒	☑	☒	Drink only during intense activity when sweating for more than an hour. Replaces electrolytes and carbohydrates during long bouts of activity.
Coconut Water	☒	☒	☒	Not recommended. Does not replace enough electrolytes during intense activity. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Flavoured Water	☒	☒	☒	Not a healthy choice. Can be higher in sugar or sugar substitutes. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Energy Drink	☒	☒	☒	Not a healthy choice. Can be higher in caffeine and sugar. May have added herbs. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Fruit Drinks, cocktail, beverage	☒	☒	☒	Not a healthy choice. All are higher in sugar and contain little to no real fruit juice. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Vitamin Water	☒	☒	☒	Not a healthy choice. May be higher in sugar or sugar substitutes. May have added herbs. Can cause stomach upset during activity.
Soft Drinks	☒	☒	☒	Not a healthy choice. May contain caffeine or sugar substitutes. Carbonation causes upset stomach during activity. Regular soft drinks are higher in sugar.

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How Much Should I Drink When I am Active?

Before Activity

You need to be well hydrated when you start your activity, practice, or competition. Drink 400–600 mL (1 ½–2 ½ cups) of fluid 2 to 3 hours before activity. The best fluid to choose before activity is water.

During Activity

You will perform better if you stay hydrated during your activity, practice, or competition. Drink 125 mL (½ cup) fluid every 15 minutes. The best fluid to choose during activity is water so you do not get an upset stomach.

If you are sweating a lot and you are active for more than an hour, you may need to have a sports drink instead of water. Sports drinks help replace fluid, blood sugar, and the electrolytes you lose in sweat (sodium and potassium).

After Activity

It is important to replace all of the fluid you lose through sweat after you finish your activity, practice, or competition. Be sure to drink at least 250–500 mL (1–2 cups) of fluid. The best fluid to choose after activity is water.

A sign of good hydration is the clearness of your urine (eg: not a deep yellow colour). After activity, continue to drink small amounts of fluid until your urine runs clear. But please note, if you take a multivitamin supplement, it can make your urine bright yellow the next time you go to the washroom.

*Homemade Citrus Sports Drink Recipe

Here is a simple recipe for a sports drink:

2 Tbsp	sugar	30 mL
⅛ tsp	salt	0.5 mL
2 Tbsp	boiling water	30 mL
2 Tbsp	orange juice	30 mL
1 Tbsp	lemon juice	15 mL
1 ¾ cup	cold water	425 mL

Combine the sugar and salt in a bowl. Add boiling water and stir until sugar and salt dissolve. Stir in remaining ingredients and chill. Makes 500 mL (2 cups).

*Nutrition information per 250 mL/1 cup: 58 calories, 0 g fat, 155 mg sodium, 42 mg potassium, 15 g carbohydrate, 15 g sugars, 0 g fibre, 0 g protein.

Tip: Other unsweetened, 100% fruit juices can be used instead of orange juice.

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