

FitFacts®



How can I teach my child about healthy hydration, especially in the warm summer months?

PROPER HYDRATION IS A HIGH PRIORITY, ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN ENGAGING IN STRENUOUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON HOT AND HUMID DAYS WHEN THE RISK OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS IS MOST SEVERE. EDUCATING CHILDREN ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HYDRATION BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER EXERCISE HELPS TO ENSURE SAFE SUMMER FUN.

Pre-hydrate. How hydrated your child is before heading outdoors is just as important as how well-hydrated he is during exercise. Kids who start activity mildly dehydrated are at increased risk of heat-related illness. Encourage your child to drink 6 to 8 ounces of water before heading out the door.

Bring water. Any time the kids go out to play, they should bring water with them. Typically, for every 20 minutes of physical activity, 9 to 12 year olds need about 3 to 8 ounces of water and older kids need 11 to 16 ounces. Although water is usually sufficient to maintain adequate hydration, consuming a sodium-containing sports drink may be warranted for exercise lasting longer than one hour. Otherwise, sports drinks generally provide nothing more than excess calories.

Have your child sit out if he or she is feeling under the weather. Children getting over an illness, especially one involving vomiting and/or diarrhea or fever (symptoms that contribute to dehydration), should return to activity slowly and pay special attention to hydration.

Recognize signs of heat-related illness. If your child develops any of the following signs of heat illness during activity, he should know to ask to be taken out of the game and seek attention from an adult: bright-red flushing of

the cheeks and face, dizziness, headache, vomiting, feeling very cold or very hot, heat cramps, an acute worsening of performance, or any other alarming changes in mental or physical status.

Rehydrate. Drinking adequate fluids after exercise helps to replace fluids lost from sweat and correct any remaining fluid deficits. A rough indicator of good hydration status is when urine color is faint-yellow to clear. How much fluid your child needs depends on many factors, including his age, duration and intensity of exercise, amount of sweat lost, and heat and humidity levels. Use your child's feelings of thirst to guide intake, or weigh him before and after exercise to determine how much fluid needs to be replaced. (1/2 pound weight loss = 8 ounce fluid deficit.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[KidsHealth](#)