

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact: Katherine Pinto
Nutrition, Food Safety and Health Agent, Wildcat Extension District
kdpinto@ksu.edu, 620-232-1930

Yay or Nah on Electrolyte Drinks

Within the past couple of years, electrolyte drinks have flooded our grocery store aisles. Next time you are at your local grocery store, try counting the different sports drinks, electrolyte powders, and hydration packets that promise to boost performance and prevent dehydration. But do most people really need this mixture to ensure they stay hydrated?

For the average person, water is usually all that's needed to stay hydrated, even during the hot summer weather. Water helps regulate body temperature, transport nutrients, and prevent dehydration. Electrolytes are minerals such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, and chloride that help maintain fluid balance, support muscle contractions, and carry nerve signals throughout the body. Most healthy adults get adequate electrolytes from a balanced diet.

Water is generally the best choice when:

- Completing light to moderate activity lasting less than an hour
- Working indoors or spending limited time outdoors
- Eating a well-balanced diet of regular meals and snacks throughout the day

When electrolyte drinks may help:

- Exercising intensely for extended periods; more than an hour
- Working outdoors in extreme heat for several hours
- Sweating heavily and losing significant fluids
- Recovering from an illness that caused excessive vomiting or diarrhea
- Participating in endurance sports in hot and humid weather

During prolonged activity, the body loses both water and sodium through sweat. Replacing electrolytes can help maintain performance and reduce the risk of heat-related illness. Something to note, many sports drinks contain added sugar and calories. If you regularly consume sugary sports drinks, you can add a significant amount of sugar to your diet.

Before you reach for an electrolyte drink, consider your activity level and how much you are sweating. For most summer activities, a water bottle and balanced meals are enough. Keeping electrolyte drinks on hand for periods of heavy sweating, strenuous exercise, or illness-related fluid loss is a good idea. Overall, water remains the simplest, healthiest, and most affordable way to stay hydrated.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov, or contact Katherine Pinto, Nutrition, Food Safety and Health Agent, kdpinto@ksu.edu or 620-232-1930.

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