

(<http://bottomlinehealth.com/>)

Better-for-Your-Body Beverages When Working Out

Published: December 8, 2011 **Publication:** HealthyWoman from Bottom Line **Source:** Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAc **Print:**



Do you guzzle a sports drink after every workout? Depending on how you exercise, that drink may not be doing you much good... and depending on the beverage you choose, it could even contribute to health problems, I heard from *HealthyWoman* advisory board member Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAc, author of **[Natural Choices for Women's Health](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20)** (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20>).

WHEN A SPORTS DRINK CAN HELP

Consider a sports drink when you are training hard or working out for more than an hour *and* sweating a lot—say, with a strenuous spinning session, marathon hike or Bikram “hot” yoga class. The reason is that *electrolytes* (minerals such as sodium, calcium, magnesium, potassium and bicarbonate) exit the body via sweat, Dr. Steelsmith said, and a sports drink provides a convenient and concentrated source for replenishing electrolytes. *Why it matters:* Electrolytes help maintain the body’s fluid balance and prevent dehydration... carry electrical signals between cells... and help the muscles, heart and other organs work properly.

Before a big workout, drink plenty of water so cells are well-hydrated. Then, when you are sweating heavily and need more than water to prevent dehydration, take frequent sips of a sports beverage *during* your workout to replace electrolytes as they are being lost, rather than waiting until you're done exercising.

When selecting a sports drink, be aware that commercial brands often contain high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), which is just plain bad for you. **Better:** Dr. Steelsmith favors naturally sweetened, HFCS-free sports drink brands, such as R.W. Knudsen's Recharge and Gatorade's G Natural line.

All-natural alternatives: Electrolytes also are found in fruits and vegetables—but of course it is less convenient to eat than to drink during a workout. And, fruit juice generally is not a great option during a workout because it naturally contains a lot of fructose, which can reduce the rate of water absorption into cells. Coconut water (the juice in young, green coconuts) or diluted vegetable juices, however, are good alternatives to sports beverages, Dr. Steelsmith said, because they are naturally high in electrolytes and low in fructose.

WHEN TO SKIP THE SPORTS DRINK

If you are doing low- to moderate-intensity exercise for less than an hour and not sweating much, you are not losing many electrolytes. In that case, drinking plain water before and during your workout should keep you adequately hydrated.

How much water do you need? "You may have heard that pale-colored urine generally is a sign of adequate hydration—but if you take a vitamin B complex supplement or a multi that contains B vitamins, your urine may be neon orange no matter how hydrated you are," Dr. Steelsmith noted. In that case, a better rule of thumb is to divide your body weight (in pounds) by two... and drink that many ounces of water during the course of the day (so if you weigh 120 pounds, drink 60 ounces). Good hydration is important every day, of course, but particularly on days that you exercise.

AFTER YOUR WORKOUT

Whether you exercised moderately or intensely, afterward it is important to consume something with protein. This helps repair the micro-tears your muscles endured during your workout.

Surprising option: Low-fat chocolate milk. A recent study in the *Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism* found that adults who drank low-fat chocolate milk within an hour after working out had an improved *VO2 max* (a measure of how much oxygen you can use during intense exercise, which is a marker of athletic endurance), more muscle and less fat than their peers who consumed a beverage with no nutrients (such as water) or one with carbohydrates and some fat but no protein.

Dr. Steelsmith cautioned that some chocolate milk brands and chocolate syrups also contain HFCS—so if you opt for chocolate milk, choose one that is naturally sweetened. Or if you would rather avoid chocolate milk's sugar and fat, Dr. Steelsmith suggested making a post-workout vegetable smoothie with added protein powder.

Source: Laurie Steelsmith, ND, LAc, is the author of [Natural Choices for Women's Health](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20) (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/140004796X/bottlinepubl-20>) (Three Rivers) and a member of the *HealthyWoman from Bottom Line* advisory board. Her private practice in naturopathic and Chinese medicine is in Honolulu. www.NaturalChoicesForWomen.com (<http://www.naturalchoicesforwomen.com/>)

0 Comments

Bottom Line Publications

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy

TOP VIEWED ARTICLES

Fitness Devices Aren't Private

(<http://bottomlinehealth.com/fitness-devices-arent-private/>)

The New Anti-Snoring Workout

(<http://bottomlinehealth.com/the-new-anti-snoring->

STAY CONNECTED WITH BOTTOM LINE



(<http://www.facebook.com/BottomLineHealth>)

(<http://twitter.com/intent/follow?>

source=followbutton&variant=1.0&screen_name=blinehealth)