

Summer Hydration Check

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So, should you be drinking that cup of coffee before your ALTA match? And what about consuming caffeinated beverages during the match? The science is shifting on both of these issues.

More than a decade ago, caffeine was on the banned list for the IOC as a stimulant agent that had potential to give athletes an unfair advantage in winning competitions. However, many athletes today use caffeine as a mild stimulant to help with energy levels.

But, beware! In the Georgia heat and humidity this time of year, excessive caffeine without adequate hydration could increase your risk for heat illness. Be conscientious about the total amount of caffeine you are drinking pre-match and still pay attention to your overall daily hydration. This often is an area that recreational players don't focus on as much as they should. As a sport dietitian working with both professional and recreational tennis players, I often find that proper off-court hydration practices are key to limiting heat illness during matches.

According to the European Food Safety Authority, caffeine consumption of up to 200 mg per day does not give rise to safety concerns for healthy adults. Similarly, for habitual users of caffeine, up to 400 mg per day is considered safe to con-

sume without health consequences. This means in practical terms that up to 2 cups of coffee is safe for consumption. In terms of energy drinks, Red Bull, for example contains 80 mg per 8-ounce can.

The fact is caffeine is a mild stimulant and may improve alertness and reaction time in athletic performance. But, keep in mind your hydration base makes a difference in how much of an effect this caffeine may have on your body from a dehydration

aspect. If you are well hydrated, moderate caffeine intake may be safe and possibly slightly enhance your performance. Conversely, consuming multiple caffeinated drinks in one day may increase your risk for dehydration as you go above the safe intake levels mentioned here.

The Mayo Clinic has published an online chart depicting typical caffeine content in popular beverages. You can find it at mayoclinic.in/2nxVoGD.

ways to increase your fluid intake off the court



- 1. Drink 8 to 16 ounces of a water-based beverage** (water, juice, milk) with every meal and snack. Aim to drink 2 to 3 liters off the court to meet your normal hydration needs.
- 2. Limit caffeinated beverage intake after a certain time of day** (for example, 1 p.m.) and set a reasonable limit on coffee or soda intake (for instance, 1 to 2 cups per day).
- 3. Substitute decaffeinated** tea, soda or coffee for some of your caffeinated drinks.
- 4. Increase your vegetable juice and milk consumption** (2 cups of vegetable juice = minimum 4 vegetable servings per day; 2 cups milk = minimum dairy intake per day).
- 5. Try carbonated, calorie-free, fruit-flavored waters** to enhance your fluid intake. And, keep your water with you at all times. The visual will remind you to drink before you are thirsty, which is the goal.

FIVE REMINDERS ABOUT HYDRATION

1. Most recreational players should consume half of their body weight in hydrating fluids in ounces off the court, spread evenly throughout the day.

2. Aim to drink at least 20 ounces and up to 1 liter of these hydrating fluids in the two-hour period before you go on the court.

3. If you're properly hydrated, your urine will have a light yellow or "lemonade" color. If it's any darker than that, you should immediately start drinking more water.

4. On the court, plan to drink during every changeover. Consume at least 2 to 4 ounces and up to 8 ounces in unusual heat and humidity circumstances. Don't be afraid to drink sport beverages on the court; these help to meet both electrolyte and energy needs.

5. Be aware of your sweat loss rate. Weigh yourself before and after you play. In ideal hydration situations, you would weigh the same if you have been drinking adequately, but if you have lost weight, a 1-pound loss is equal to 2 cups or .5 liters.

