

Parade's Guide To

Better Fitness



By Michael Q'Shea

Should a sports drink ever replace water during a workout?

Water helps *you* stay hydrated during exercise, but it's not the safest way to maintain the body's fluid balance if you're doing an endurance exercise that lasts more than 90 minutes. Drinking lots of water without adequately replacing the sodium you lose as you perspire may put you at risk for hyponatremia. This potentially fatal condition occurs when sodium levels in the blood drop because a large intake of water has diluted the blood.

"To stay hydrated and avoid hyponatremia, replace fluid at a rate equal to your sweat loss," says Dr. Francis G. O'Connor, co-author of *Textbook of Running Medicine*. "Drink 400ml [13.5 ounces] to 800ml [27 ounces] of fluid for every hour you exercise. And switch to an electrolyte solution [sports drink] if the workout extends past an hour." Sports drinks not only replace the

Always replenish your body's sodium during long exercises.

body's lost sodium but also maintain the blood's electrolyte balance and provide fuel for working muscles.

"Long-distance runners, especially those who run a marathon in four or more hours, should be aware of hyponatremia," says Barbara Baldwin, programs director for the American Running Association. "Symptoms include confusion, dizziness, nausea, severe fatigue, lack of coordination, swollen hands and feet, and headache."

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