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SAY 'NO' TO SPORTS DRINKS

Is a sports drink part of your regular workout regime? If so, you may be wasting your money, as well as adding excess kilojoules to your day, and potentially leaving you with a dental bill due to tooth decay. Nutrition expert Ashleigh Feltham explains.

Sports drinks are cleverly marketed as a refreshing way to rehydrate after physical activity, aiding recovery better than water alone can. Many professional sporting clubs are sponsored by sports drink companies, with players quenching their thirst with these brands and acting as role models to young influential admirers. But the truth is, most of us do not compete in high level sports that require prolonged periods of intense exercise; yet sports drinks have crept into our exercise routines. This article will help you make the best drink choices when exercising, which may also help protect your teeth, save you money and ensure you are well hydrated before, during and after your exercise sessions.

What makes up a sports drink?

There are three main components that make up a sports drink.

1. Carbohydrate (sugars, sucrose and glucose)

Most sports drinks contain 36-40g (9-10 teaspoons!) per 600ml bottle. Alarmingly, this is one and a half times the World Health Organisation's daily recommendation for added sugar!

2. Electrolytes sodium (i.e. salt) and potassium

Sodium helps the body to 'hold onto' fluid more effectively. It also



makes you feel thirstier, which helps promote fluid intake to assist with meeting fluid goals. In truth, most of us already consume too much salt and losses through sweat won't negatively impact our performance or health. In terms of potassium, many readily available health foods are great sources of potassium. These include bananas, dark leafy greens, potatoes, beans, fish, yoghurt, squash, mushrooms and avocados.

3. Food acids, artificial colouring and flavouring

Sports drinks contain these things to aid palatability and stability of the product. Food acids combined with sugar, make these drinks acidic, which can contribute to dental enamel erosion.

Dental professionals have been concerned for some time about increasing rates of dental problems among active people of all ages, from pre-school children through to adults. In some cases, the increased rate of erosion has been linked to consumption of products such as sports drinks.

When are sports drinks useful?

Sports drinks are primarily designed for use during exercise that lasts longer than 90 minutes, by providing optimal fluid and fuel delivery. Sports drinks may allow athletes to perform for longer and more effectively in training and competition, by providing energy to working muscles and the brain. For example, during triathlons, long distance running or cycling. Most often, in a gym setting, basketball game and for everyday exercise, water is the best and cheapest option to prevent dehydration and help you perform at your best.

Rehydrate with water

It is essential to stay hydrated with water during a workout session. Water is vital for your body to maintain a healthy temperature as well as to replace any lost fluids from sweating. If you do not consume enough water, your exercise performance, and health can be adversely affected. A good way to check that you are sufficiently hydrated before exercise is to check the colour of your urine. Ideally it should be a pale yellow or straw colour, rather than a dark yellow or orange colour, as these latter shades suggest your body is not adequately hydrated.

In summary

For most of us, sports drinks provide unnecessary sugar and salt, and we would actually benefit *more* from eating a high potassium food like a banana, than a sweet-flavoured drink filled with artificial substances. Sugary drinks are also linked to diabetes, dental caries and weight gain, and in reality, water is all we need to rehydrate and perform at our best.

This is why the YMCA is choosing to remove these and other sugary drinks from its fridges. For more information about this exciting initiative, speak to our friendly customer service teams at a YMCA near you. **Y**

