

SPORTS DRINKS FOR CHILDREN

It is well accepted in Sports Science that poor hydration and lack of fuel can reduce performance. In the last few years there has been a huge increase in the use of "Sports Drinks" with high usage amongst children. These sports drinks have been heavily marketed with claims to help performance. When scrutinised these claims have not been adequately supported. Furthermore, there are serious questions raised about their use in children. Most sports drinks have close to, or exceed the recommended daily intake of sugar for a child. Excess sugar intake is linked to obesity, type II diabetes and other conditions. Also, a high intake of sugar can cause an insulin spike followed by fatigue. This is not good for sports performance. It is not widely known but the manufacturers guidelines are that sports drinks are **NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN UNDER 16.**



The consensus is that if a child is exercising for up to an hour, WATER is all that is needed. For longer sessions, high carbohydrate snacks can be added such as a banana, dried fruit or a HEALTHY cereal bar [check for added sugar content]. These give a slower, steadier release of fuel. A homemade sports drink can be used too. Healthier homemade options can be half fruit juice e.g. orange or apple and half water, 500ml each to make one litre [preferable] or 200ml squash with 800ml water. If the child sweats a lot or it is very hot, a pinch of salt [one eighth of a teaspoon] can be added, preferably rock salt or Himalayan salt rather than table salt for a broader range of minerals.

Another recent product is the ENERGY DRINK. Not only high in sugar but also very high in caffeine and sometimes other natural stimulants. These are linked with neurological and cardiovascular system effects in children and adolescents, type II diabetes and obesity. Studies show that they reduce performance. They are **NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN** and often **banned** for them.

References:

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