

NUTRITION TIPS | SUPPLEMENTS

Why Drinking Water Alone Isn't Enough to Stay Hydrated

Consuming adequate amounts of water daily is essential — but you also need to ensure your body holds on to those fluids.



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By Samantha McKinney, RD, CPT | [Life Time Training](#)

When it comes to coaching clients, there are a few core priorities to begin with that seem to make the biggest — and quickest — impact on their results and how they feel. One of these, almost ubiquitously, is addressing hydration levels.

Optimizing hydration status is absolutely crucial for boosting energy, increasing alertness, supporting workout performance, and even curbing cravings. Plus, it's important for the health of your skin, the inner workings of your immune system, and the function of your joints.

However, just drinking water alone may not always be enough.

Hydration Drainers

There are several aspects that impact hydration beyond fluid intake. In fact, almost one quarter of members who complete in-depth lab testing at Life Time have markers of slight dehydration, despite reporting that they drink plenty of water.

Here are some factors that decrease your hydration status:

- Chronic stress
- Excess caffeine or alcohol intake
- Hot or humid climates
- Heavy sweating
- Higher blood-sugar levels

Considering many of us deal with one, if not multiple, of the factors above, optimizing hydration may go beyond the conventional advice to “just drink more water.”

Why not just water alone?

Undoubtedly, [drinking plenty of water is needed for optimal health](#).

However, some of the factors listed above cause issues by increasing urination, and so at times, it can be helpful to focus on making sure your body is holding onto water appropriately. One such way to help assist the body's balance of fluids is through supporting electrolyte levels.

Electrolyte Support

Electrolytes are minerals such as sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, and magnesium that are physiologically needed for the basic functions of cells, including muscle and nerve function.

Mixing electrolytes in with water — particularly around workouts, at times when increased sweating is expected, or when you're sick and experiencing fever, diarrhea, or vomiting — to prioritize both fluid and [electrolyte intake](#) is essential. If you're exercising, it can also prevent dizziness and muscle cramps.

What You Can Do

Most clients report feeling their best by first prioritizing water intake from non-caffeinated, natural beverages such as water and herbal tea, along with aiming for a target of about half their goal body weight (measured in pounds) in ounces of water daily. For example, if someone has a 160-pound weight goal, they may target 80 ounces of water per day.

Here are some tips for supporting your body's hydration and electrolyte levels:

- Unless you have a medical reason to restrict fluids, dial in your water intake and aim to consume half of your goal body weight in ounces of water per day, plus about 16 ounces per hour of exercise.
- Limit your caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Add in electrolytes around workout times or if you're experiencing carbohydrate or salt cravings.
- When choosing electrolyte support, ensure the product does not contain added sugar or artificial colors, flavors, or sweeteners. Two trainer favorites are [Re-Lyte Electrolyte Drink Mix](#) and [UCAN Hydrate](#).
- In the context of a nutrition plan that is based primarily on whole, unprocessed foods, feel free to include snacks that are naturally higher in sodium, such as pickles, beef jerky, olives, and cheese.
- Aim to [use Celtic or Himalayan salt on foods](#) such as meats and vegetables at your main meals.

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SAMANTHA MCKINNEY, RD, CPT



Samantha McKinney has been a dietitian, trainer and coach for over 10 years. At first, her interests and experience were in a highly clinical setting in the medical field, which ended up laying a strong foundation for understanding metabolism as her true passion evolved: wellness and prevention. She hasn't looked back since and has had the honor of supporting Life Time's members and nutrition programs in various roles since 2011.

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With Paul Kriegler, RD

[Season 4, Episode 2](#)
September 14, 2021

Our bodies are 70 percent water, so maintaining a healthy body starts with sustaining a healthy hydration habits. In this mini episode, Paul Kriegler, RD, explains why proper hydration is so essential for our health and how we can make sure we're optimizing our water intake.

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By Samantha McKinney, RD, CPT

Try one of these three creative ways to boost your body's hydration levels.

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Salt's Place in a Healthy Diet

With Darryl Bosshardt of Redmond Real Salt

[Season 3, Episode 11](#) June 8, 2021

Salt is one of those nutrition topics that causes a lot of confusion: Is it good for us — or not? Darryl Bosshardt of Redmond Real Salt joins us to cut through the misconceptions, explaining the essential role of salt in our health, and how the good/bad conversation really boils down to what form of salt you're eating and the foods it's attached to.

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