

The importance of hydration

Summer is a great time to be active and hydration should be an important consideration during exercise. Many people are aware of how dehydration occurs and the risks that it poses, however; over-hydration can also occur, which is known as hyponatraemia.

During exercise, the body maintains an optimal temperature by sweating. Besides containing water, sweat also contains electrolytes, in particular sodium. When sweat loss is high, which generally occurs during the warmer months, both water and sodium need to be replaced to re-establish normal total body water. In some cases, the rate of sweat loss may be quite low, and it is unnecessary, and can be potentially dangerous, to drink at rates which are far greater than the loss of sweat. This can dilute the level of sodium in the blood, which can cause a range of symptoms including; headaches, vomiting and in severe cases, death.

To avoid this from occurring, it is important during exercise to develop a plan for drinking based on your own fluid losses and sweat rates. Aim to match your sweat losses with fluid intake by drinking at a rate that is comfortable. If exercise lasts more than two hours, or if sweat rates are particularly high, sodium should be consumed along with water. The easiest way to achieve this is by drinking a sports drink, or consuming sodium through foods such as sandwiches, crackers and fruit buns. For more information, please visit the Get Moving Tasmania website: http://www.getmoving.tas.gov.au/resources/for_everyone