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|  NPY Gators Nutrition: Hydration |

One of the fastest ways for an athlete to tank on his or her performance is to become dehydrated. Most kids don’t drink enough during and after practices, nor do they drink enough throughout the day in preparation for their practices. They often wait until they are thirsty before drinking, which could be too late and they end up behind on their fluid intake. Or they think they are hungry when what their body really needs is water.

As a result, many swimmers suffer subtle side effects in their performance including:

* Decreased endurance
* Decreased cognitive function
* Cramping throughout practice

Several factors affect how much fluid your swimmer needs.

* The length and frequency of their practices
* The temperature on the pool deck when they are sitting for hours at a meet
* The intensity of their races (swimming all-out)

So how much does your swimmer need to drink?

At least half of their body weight in ounces PLUS an additional 16 oz. during and/or after exercise.

For example: a 100lb athlete needs to drink at least 50 oz. of fluid a day PLUS 16 oz.

OR A 120lb athlete needs to drink at least 60 oz. PLUS 16 oz.

What should your swimmer drink?

* Water is the absolute best thing for an athlete to drink.
* Milk or non-dairy alternative is a close second.
* 100% fruit juice, but juice should be limited to less than 8 ounces per day due to the sugar content.
* Sports drinks are acceptable *during* practices that are *over an hour*, but aren’t necessary any other time.
* Sodas should be avoided.

How to tell if your athlete is getting enough to drink? Check the color of his or her urine. A well-hydrated swimmer’s urine should be clear or very light yellow. Dark yellow means your swimmer is well below recommended fluid intake.

\*\*Parents- if you are volunteering on deck at a meet, you need to stay well hydrated, too!