



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at Sullivan Benefits

While it's important to stay hydrated during exercise, it is possible to drink too much fluid, especially for participants in long-distance or high-intensity activities. Overhydrating can throw off your body's electrolyte balance, leading to a potentially fatal condition called hyponatremia.

SPORTS DRINKS AND ENERGY BARS

Exercising is great for your body, but it is important to take care of yourself during and after your workout. You can do this by staying hydrated and maintaining your blood sugar levels.

Sports Drinks

When you're exercising, your body quickly absorbs blood sugars for energy. You also lose electrolytes, or minerals such as sodium and potassium, when you sweat. A good way to replenish your blood sugars and electrolytes is to drink sports drinks.

Most sports drinks offer a blend of sugars such as glucose, sucrose, fructose and galactose. A few may also add maltodextrin, a complex carbohydrate made of several glucose units. Some research suggests that sports drinks offering a carbohydrate blend may improve the amount of carbohydrates that eventually get to your muscles as fuel. Different sugars are absorbed in different ways, so the rate of carbohydrate absorption is improved by providing several different sugars.

Sports drinks also come with added electrolytes like sodium and potassium. Sodium, the electrolyte lost in the greatest amount, helps maintain fluid balance in the body and improves hydration.

Energy Bars

With so many varieties available, selecting the right energy bar is anything but simple. To choose the best one for you, read the label. High-carbohydrate bars provide carbohydrate fueling both before and during a long workout. These bars typically provide about 70 percent of their calories from carbohydrates as sugars.

How quickly carbohydrates get into the circulation is referred to as the glycemic index. Eating a high glycemic index bar means rapid release of carbohydrates into the blood stream, giving the muscles

a quick "shot" of fuel, which is ideal during a workout. Eating a low glycemic index bar results in a slower release of sugar into the circulation and sustained energy, which is best before exercise.

Keep in mind that many energy bars, particularly high-carbohydrate bars, are intended for people who spend an hour or more doing aerobic exercise like biking or running. The best way you can replenish your blood sugars, whether you're exercising or not, is by eating a balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.