



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Water vs. Sports Drinks

Please don't accuse me of sounding like a "broken record," but I hear the talk from grandkids, coaches and others regarding the difference between drinking water and Gatorade or Powerade. Groups are continually doing on-going research on water vs. sports drinks. I'm rewriting this from previous issues because, according to the scientists, water can do more for you and your health than sports drinks.

Dr. Robert Roberge, a UNM exercise physiologist, has done extensive research on this subject. He wrote an article on the webpage of the university's paper www.dailylobo.com on the effects of water vs. sports drinks. His study ran from 1999 through 2004, researching Gatorade's claim that it is superior to water in the ability to hydrate the body. If the weights are the same, it is obvious that Gatorade isn't retained any better than water. The reason that Gatorade is thought to rehydrate better is because of the carbohydrates in the drinks, which aids the small intestine in absorbing water in the body. The body absorbs water seven times faster with carbohydrates, but according to Dr. Roberge, there is no more evidence that the body is able to retain the water.

After the research where the subjects drank the water and the Gatorade, the subjects ran to the bathroom just as fast. The research showed that Gatorade provides athletes with carbohydrates needed during exercise, but unless a person is going to exercise strenuously for 90 minutes, consuming carbohydrates is self-defeating. He also said that there is no reason for people to ingest a drink that is basically water. You can make the same drink out of sugar and Kool-Aid, and then add table salt. It is effectively the same for 1/5th of the cost of Gatorade.

Gatorade's Sport Science Institute's website states that water quenches the thirst, but it isn't an effective hydrator, because it prematurely satisfies thirst. The study showed that most people don't drink enough water during exercise, and the fluids in their bodies are constantly depleted during urination. The salt in Gatorade maintains their desire to keep drinking it. Dr. Roberge says that the same argument against water used by the company applies to sports drinks. The argument is valid for both water and Gatorade. Dr. Roberge surmises that (*exercise scientists*) are improving in integrity and accuracy of science.

Mr. Peter Lui, representing the soko.com health and fitness link states that sweating is the body's mechanism for cooling down, which is triggered by heavy activity and heat. The higher sweat production occurs during exercise. As sweat rises to the skin, larger amounts of water, sodium chloride and potassium are brought to the surface. The loss of these electrolytes decreases the athletic effectiveness, since the loss of sodium chloride and water dehydrates the body. The most important thing to know is the amount of sweat produced is equally proportionate to the amount of energy used up. It is when the body loses fluids that the debate between water and the sports drinks comes to the fore.

Other variations contain fewer carbohydrates, more vitamins, more electrolytes and caffeine. Both drinks boast that they can help the body to work harder and more effectively during exercise by replacing electrolytes as you lose them and enabling your body to drink more liquid. Drinking more liquids quickens rehydration. Gatorade claims that its drink does it better than water. The real truth is that sports drinks are more effective if you're planning to take part in an extreme exercise event for long periods of time, like a triathlon or marathon runs.

WATER FACTS - Water contains minerals and electrolytes, as does Gatorade and PowerAde. However, water contains calcium, nitrates, sulphates, and zinc, in addition to electrolytes. One of the selling points of sports drinks have against water is that water has no taste. Sugar and flavoring added to sports drinks increases their appeal. They also boast that people soon tire of drinking water because of the lack of taste. Water does not contain the calories of sports drinks. This may be the reason why they released newer versions with fewer calories.

FITNESS WATER - Gatorade released its line of 'Propel' fitness water in 2000. It has the same ingredients as Gatorade but also includes more vitamins and fewer calories. The selling points are the same as Gatorade. The lightly flavored water is supposed to make you drink more, while helping you to stay active. The fact is that water does the same thing.

THE VERDICT - While Gatorade, PowerAde, Propel, and all other off-shoots boast superiority to water in some way or other, drinks that contain electrolytes are only at their most effective during extended periods of intensive exercise. Water is a much better substitute for normal periods of exercise. If you normally exercise for a period of an hour or more you can easily replenish and rehydrate your muscles with water. If your body mostly contains water in the first place, why replace that water with some foreign liquid?

KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE - Athletes and workers will have their own preferences as to what they want to drink while they exercise or work, and the debate of which is best will continue. It's just best to know the facts, no matter which drink you like better. The Univ. of California's San Francisco Department of Nutrition's website www.uest.edu/st.share.nutrition answers the question. Isn't Gatorade the best drink for playing sports and quenching thirst? **NO!!** Gatorade is not as bad as other drinks like soda, but when you are playing sports, water is probably the best. Gatorade has sugar in it, which makes it harder for your body to absorb the fluid you need while playing sports. But as long as you have a healthy diet and aren't running marathons, water will provide the needed electrolytes and is probably your best option. All the articles that I have read use sports and exercise for their research comparisons. Normal field work compares closely to these.

No information I have read totally favors sports drinks over water.

**QUENCH YOUR THIRST WITH
WATER FIRST!!**

~~LEAD THE WAY WITH WATER TODAY~~