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SPORTS DRINKS ... HELP OR HYPE? DIETITIAN WEIGHS BENEFITS

LATROBE, PA, MAY 20, 2010 ... With the warmer weather of Summer fast approaching, the concern for maintaining adequate hydration becomes a priority for many coaches, trainers, parents and athletes. Dehydration can impair athletic performance. Minor dehydration can impair concentration, coordination, and reaction time and reduce stamina. In order to keep from becoming dehydrated, it is important to drink plenty of fluids before, during and after intense periods of exercise.

Dawn Davoli, RD, LDN, nutrition consultant for Excelsa Health's *Golden Hour* cardiovascular program notes, "Once you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated." This is where the use of sports drinks comes into play.

Nearly 50 years ago, the first and most successful sports drink, Gatorade®, was developed. Coaches at the University of Florida - where the team name is "the Gators" - were the first to pioneer the idea of providing nutrients in liquid form for athletes. It was intended to supply energy (calories) and replace nutrients lost in sweat; it contained glucose, water, sodium, chloride and potassium. For many years "Gatorade" and "sports drinks" were synonymous.

Over the years, new products have appeared, and now there are many "sports drinks" on the market. "Knowing which brand of drink to choose can be tricky," noted Davoli. "The basic intent of beverages consumed before and during exercise remains the same: to maintain proper hydration, to provide carbohydrate as a fuel, and to quickly replenish electrolytes. This will allow prolonged or sustained performance and delay fatigue."

The following table provides a quick comparison of several pre-exercise sports drinks on the market today

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Product Name	Serving Size**	Calories	Carbohydrate*	Sodium/Potassium
All Sport Body Quencher	8 oz.	60	16 gm	55mg/60 mg
Gatorade G2	8 oz.	25	7 gm	110 mg/30 mg
Gatorade Thirst Quencher	8 oz.	50	14 gm	110 mg/30 mg
POWERade	8 oz.	64	17 gm	53 mg/32 mg

**Serving size is 8 oz. More common serving size is 16 oz., 24 oz. and 32 oz. containers. Adjust nutrition information accordingly!

*The percentage of carbohydrate is 4 to 7 percent and is typically well tolerated (no GI upset) by most athletes.

Criteria for Consuming Sports Drinks

For most athletes and activities, water is still the most appropriate beverage; however, manufacturers promoting their products would disagree. Many factors must be considered, such as: type and length of activity, the need for carbohydrate or electrolyte replacement, and the environment.

Pre-Event: Recommendation is that athletes drink 16 oz. of fluid about 2 hours before exercise/activity to promote adequate hydration.

Immediately Before Event: Drink another 6-8 oz. water or Gatorade.

During Event: Athletes should start drinking early and at regular intervals in an attempt to replace all the water lost through sweating. The recommendation is to drink 8 oz. every 10-15 minutes. If the event is longer than 60 minutes or is very intense, Gatorade or other sports drinks should be used instead of water. Athletes who perform continuous exercise for more than one hour (marathon runners) or high intensity exercise for 1-4 hours (soccer players) benefit from a carbohydrate containing beverage, like Gatorade.

Post Event: Recommendation is that athletes drink 16 oz. for every pound lost during the duration of exercise.

Although sports drinks are advertised to *all* athletes – from Olympians to weekend warriors – many casual exercisers do not need the additional carbohydrate and calories that these drinks provide. Davoli advises, “Be careful when giving children these

sports drinks, especially if your child's weight is a concern. They are not calorie-free. Often times, water is a better choice for children.”

For all your sports nutrition needs, Excelsa Health offers nutrition coaching by a registered dietitian. Phone the Excelsa Health Call Center at 1-877-771-1234 to set up an appointment.