



[Sara GaynesSara.Gaynes@huffingtonpost.com](mailto:Sara.Gaynes@huffingtonpost.com) [Become a fan of this reporter](#)

## Best And Worst Ways To Hydrate Your Summer Workout

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According to a new report from the CDC, nearly [6,000 people will go to the emergency room](#) this summer for heat illnesses related to sports and exercise. Dehydration is a major culprit of these ER visits, and it's also easily preventable.

We spoke to top nutritionists to find out the best and worst ways to hydrate if you're planning on outdoor exercise. Of course, the number one choice is plain water -- our experts recommend aiming for 20 ounces two hours before a workout --but if you're looking to mix things up a bit, here are some good options, along with some ones to avoid.

GOOD: Coconut Water



"It's kind of hot right now," says Jackie Newgent, RD, an N.Y.C.-based nutritionist. "It has a lot of electrolytes, fewer calories than a sports drink and you also get carbohydrates to help you through the workout."

However, if you're planning on exercising for over an hour in the heat, be forewarned that coconut water might not cut it. "It's much lower in sodium and much higher in potassium than most sports drinks," explains Julie Upton, MS, RD, CSSD, a certified sports dietitian and co-founder of [AppsForHealth.com](#).

BAD: Soda



Soda is never at the top of any nutritionist's list for healthy beverages, but it's particularly dicey if you're trying to stay hydrated to get through a workout.

Jackie Keller, a nutrition expert and professional wellness coach, warns that the sugary, fizzy concoctions can lead to bloating and stomach cramping, both of which can slow you down.

"A lot of sodas also have sodium, and we get so much sodium in our diets, we usually don't need more," she says. Newgent's advice? If you must have a soda, have it *well* before you hit the pavement.

#### GOOD: Infused Water



If you're not a fan of regular-old-H<sub>2</sub>O but don't need a serious sports drink, infused water is a great way to add a little kick to the plain stuff. You can go store-bought -- think electrolyte-enhanced varieties -- or make your own.

"Throw in cucumber slices, mint, a lemon wedge, mint or another fruit," says Newgent.

"Anything that enhances your consumption is a good thing!"

#### BAD: Alcohol



It may seem totally obvious, but if you're lazing around on a summer afternoon, have a cocktail, and decide to go for a run a few hours later, you could start off dehydrated before you take your first step.

"Alcohol dehydrates you, plain and simple," says Newgent. "You can drink in the summer, but always do it after workouts, not before, and always have at least a cup of water between drinks."

#### GOOD: Caffeinated Drinks



It may surprise you, but the latest research suggests coffee and tea can be a boost to your hydration efforts. "You retain more liquid than you lose," says Newgent.

Plus, if you're in the habit of having a cup of coffee or tea before you start your day, it may throw you off or alter your energy level if you skip your mug before exercising outdoors.

There's a catch, though: "It's fine to have 12 ounces of a caffeinated drink before you work out," says Upton. "But you should have one to two liters of your beverage of choice before you exercise in the heat, and you should *not* be having liters of caffeine."

#### BAD: Energy Drinks



Of course, not all caffeinated drinks are created equal. "Energy drinks are way more concentrated than coffee, and they're certainly not going to fuel your workout," says Keller.

#### GOOD: Fruits



"It's a great idea to eat your water!" says Keller. "Not only are you getting water, you're getting nutrients to help you take up that water and it sticks with you a bit longer." Try fruits like watermelon, berries, oranges -- "anything that drips on you," says Newgent.

### GOOD: Chocolate Milk



Our experts agreed that this childhood treat was a great way to rehydrate post-workout, with the added benefit of protein, carbs and sugars to replace the nutrients you lose during exercise.

"Organic chocolate milk comes in little six-to-eight ounce cartons -- it's pre-portioned and a great way to get your water, protein and calcium," says Keller.

### BAD: Seltzer



This cousin of H<sub>2</sub>O may seem like a good workout-hydration pick, but it's got its drawbacks. "Like soda, it can cause bloating and gas, which isn't optimal for a workout," says Keller.

There's also a quantity-consumed issue: "For exercise, you need something that's really gulp-able. Bubbles can slow you down, it's hard to drink. You can't chug seltzer," explains Upton.

Really craving a bit of fizz? Try a naturally-bubbly water, like Perrier, says Keller.

### GOOD: Vegetables



Like fruit, veggies are a great way to "eat your water." "Many vegetables are more than 90 percent water, and soluble fiber helps you push it through your system," says Keller.

As an added bonus, veggies are a great pre-workout food -- they break down very quickly, so you can grab a green snack 15 minutes before a workout and still be rarin' to go, says Keller.

## BAD: Super-Cold Drinks



"If something is really extra-cold and you drink it quickly, it can actually contribute to stomach-cramping," says Newgent. So even though it's blazing out, be wary of having anything at icy temps during a sweat session.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/02/best-and-worst-ways-to-hydrate-summer-workout\\_n\\_915633.html#s319960&title=GOOD\\_Coconut\\_Water](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/02/best-and-worst-ways-to-hydrate-summer-workout_n_915633.html#s319960&title=GOOD_Coconut_Water)