

A Closer Look at Sports Drinks

A wide range of sports drinks are currently available in the market. Some recent reports even suggested that sport drinks have replaced sodas and became the best-selling drink. ‘Healthy’ as they claim to be, are sports drinks really so?

What are sports drinks?

Sports drinks are specially designed for athletes engaging in endurance training (e.g. marathon and soccer); their function is to replenish energy, body liquid and electrolytes lost during training. The major component of sports drinks is water; other ingredients include sugars and electrolytes (e.g. sodium and potassium). Some brands also contain caffeine.

Most people don’t need sports drinks. Water is always the best.

As our daily activities seldom last as long as endurance training, we don’t need to use sports drinks to replenish the loss of body substances. Water is good enough in most cases. Besides, sports drinks contain sugar. Quite a number of such products contain more than 7.5 grams of sugar per 100 ml of the product. As sports drinks can be fattening, we should limit its consumption.

‘Light’ sports drinks

‘Light’ (sugar-free) versions of sports drinks are now available in the market. These products use artificial sweeteners in lieu of sugar, claiming that they contain fewer calories and can replenish electrolytes. In fact, we can easily replenish electrolytes with a balanced diet without taking these drinks. Furthermore, artificial sweeteners may cause people to become addicted to the sugary taste and lead to cravings for sugary items. Thus, we should limit the consumption of these drinks even it is a ‘light’ version.

Sports drinks may contain caffeine

To enhance the performance of athletes, caffeine is added to some sports drinks. As some people take a longer time to metabolise caffeine, they may experience palpitations, tremor in hands, insomnia and other symptoms after consumption.