

Liquids

...The Key To Healthy Muscle Growth

  Hal Peat

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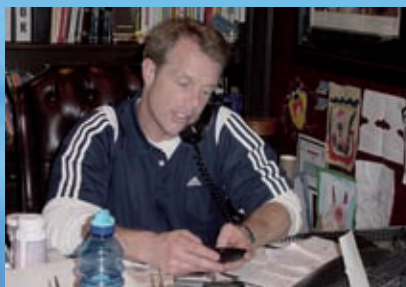
**Maintaining The Right Balance
And Quantity Of Liquids Is Critical
To Achieving A Better Physique**



Alex Arcanti

Solid nutrients ranging from meat, grain, fruit and vegetables to more general proteins and carbohydrates all play a major part in most discussions of the important elements of bodybuilding nutrition. But often the subject of liquids and their role is overlooked, or not examined sufficiently in any planning for a successful nutritional routine during either the on-season or off-season periods of bodybuilding. This is a major omission, when we consider that humans have a liquid content which is some 60% of overall weight. In fact, athletes such as bodybuilders, where the appearance of the physique is affected dramatically by the degree of water content and moisture, have perhaps the greatest reasons of all to pay attention to liquids and their benefits.

Maintaining sufficient hydration to be healthy is often a difficult issue for the bodybuilder, simply because the entire process of preparing for a bodybuilding event will emphasize depleting and “dropping” water to look “dry”, in order to display muscle density and separation to its best advantage onstage. However, a very depleted appearance on a physique can sometimes also result in an overall look that is just too “stringy”, depending on the body type of the athlete. This type of physique can probably benefit more from being fuller and retaining a more normal level of hydration and thicker looking skin. There is certainly a balance for many types of physique between achieving a very vascular appearance and a full, thicker appearance. But aside from considerations about exterior results, there is the more vital consideration of health and the body’s capacity to meet the extra demands placed on it by training and diet. So, for instance, if an extreme drop in liquids drastically impairs the body, then this can negatively affect its ability to perform major functions, including digestion, metabolism and muscle growth and repair itself. Clearly, there is a limit to observe both for safety and appearance that bodybuilders are well advised to follow, both for health and even for appearance’s sake.



You body uses water for everything, from metabolising food to eliminating toxins.

HOW THE BODY LOSES WATER ...AND HOW TO PREVENT IT

Nowadays, athletes have the choice of a wide range of liquid supplements and post-workout drinks along with plentiful bottled water. The decision to make between relying on water or having daily sports drink should depend on the intensity, frequency and duration of their gym workout, along with their individual needs from the mineral and other nutritional replacement benefits that a sports drink can provide. Water is in general sufficient to replace fluids that are lost during low-to-moderately intense exercise that lasts less than an hour. For longer and more intense exercise, the intake of sports drinks is more effective for re-hydration and to replenish carbohydrates as the body’s muscle and liver glycogen supply begins to decrease.

There are numerous ingredients in sports drinks to be aware of. Those made with simple carbohydrates – and which are most common – are easy for the body to digest and burn for energy during a workout. Because longer and more intense training can lead to electrolyte imbalances, sports drinks with electrolyte

content can help prevent this and in the appropriate quantities, something water alone cannot provide. Competitive bodybuilders will certainly be in this second more advanced category. Massive young amateur heavyweight Rich Legislador, who won the overall men’s title at the NPC Western Regional Championships in 2006, says, “I live and train in a dry and desert environment. Remaining constantly aware of my liquid intake is extremely important to my overall condition and progress”.

Rich is typical of rising amateur heavyweights who can lose a large amount of body moisture simply due to living in an excessively dry climate, along with the high degree of moisture their bodies will lose during intense training periods.

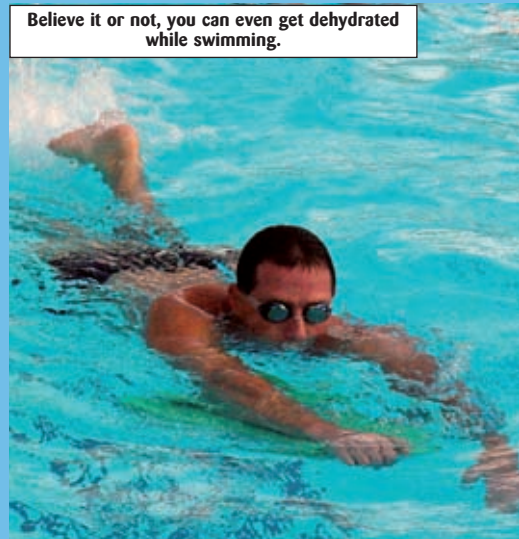
The solutions: having a constant supply of both pure bottled water always at hand for those hours of the day when they are not working out, and then switching to liquid replacement drinks after workouts. A meal in liquid supplement form is also a useful method of speeding absorption into the digestive system before or after a training session.

STAYING HYDRATED IN DIFFERENT CONDITIONS AND CLIMATES

It is not only hot or tropical climates that can create extra demands on the body’s ability to remain well hydrated. Winter weather, for instance, can lessen your awareness of sweat loss but the body’s need for hydration remains as constant as always and should not be ignored. The body continues to evaporate water even in the coldest of weather. And evaporation is especially important for bodybuilding athletes in any climate since this is the body’s main method of relieving itself of heat during exercise periods. So, during exercise dress in layers that can be removed as the body warms up and this will promote sweat evaporation instead of retention.

Another challenging environment for the human body is high altitude, so if you live and train high above sea level then you will have noticed how the body tends to easily dehydrate also in such locations. The fact is that the lungs

Believe it or not, you can even get dehydrated while swimming.





Jason Mathas

Just 2% dehydration can reduce your performance level by 10%.

must work harder and faster in thinner air, resulting in fluid loss from the evaporation in the body's respiratory tract. It is certainly wiser to take in more fluids at higher altitudes than when being at closer to sea level.

To summarize the key points to remember about effective hydration throughout the day as a bodybuilding athlete:

- Make sure to always start your workout being well hydrated. Drink about 500ml of fluid at least two hours before exercise.
- During your workout, take your fluids early on in the session and try to take in 125-250ml at 10-20 minute intervals.
- Your goal should be to replace at least 80% of water-loss through body perspiration during exercise.
- For low-to-moderately intense training lasting less than one hour, water is a sufficient fluid replacement drink.
- For intense training lasting up to an hour or more, a sport drink with an 8% carbohydrate content can increase the rate of water absorption. It also provides additional fuel, delays fatigue and boosts your performance.
- Fluid replacement drinks that are carbohydrate (energy) drinks are an excellent resource for rapid re-hydration and recovery. Consuming 30-60 grams carbohydrate per hour can stabilize blood sugar levels, and improve exercise performance that lasts more than hour.

There are other additional strategies which bodybuilders can always rely on to assist with body moisture, water depletion and maintaining muscle and skin that looks "shredded" but still healthy and full. Using a moisture-rich body conditioning lotion on exposed areas of the skin can also help in assisting the body to maintain adequate moisture without excessive evaporation.

Speaking about his skin conditioning technique bodybuilder Rich Legislador adds, "I will make time before a competitive event to exfoliate my skin and then keep it extra moist

before a show so that it remains smooth and healthy-looking onstage".

Other helpful points to consider would be to wear clothing which "breathes", because it wicks air and moisture outward, thus assisting the body in being able to also breathe naturally and maintain a normal temperature.

The essential point to remember about hydration is that whatever kind of climate an athlete may live and train in, whatever his body type, age, weight or other individual physical factors, and whatever his goals may be for competing in ultimate "ripped" condition, paying consistent and intelligent attention to liquids and their effects is a key factor in both short-term physique goals and long-term health. Taking time to research and understand the various and many types of fluid replacement drinks nowadays on the market – their actual sugar composition, their particle content and their intended effect – will benefit any athlete in making the most intelligent and effective choices to improve his own hydration. **BF**



The human body needs water more than food.