

# Sports Drinks

Sports drinks are generally made up of water, sugar and a small amount of sodium and potassium. They often contain artificial colours and/or flavours, artificial sweeteners and other additives.

Sports drinks were originally designed to keep athletes hydrated and performing optimally when they are engaged in vigorous continuous activity lasting longer than 90 minutes. The premise is that sugar provides some energy, and electrolytes (sodium and potassium) replace what the body loses through sweat. However, they have no nutritive benefits for young athletes involved in sports of lower intensity and duration.

More recently, these drinks are increasingly being consumed by, and marketed to, children and teens, the majority of whom have no need for them. If children are engaged in endurance sports, it is healthier for them to have:

- regular water breaks every 15 or 20 minutes.
- a healthy snack during breaks.
- water and a healthy snack after a game or workout.

For an easy and healthy way to replace the sodium and potassium lost in sweat, active children can drink plain chilled milk/unsweetened fortified soy beverage, which provide all the electrolytes young athletes need, with no added sugar. Plain milk and unsweetened fortified soy beverage also contain calcium for healthy bones.

The table below compares the ingredients in a sports drink to those in plain milk:

	<b>Sports Drink (250 mL/1 cup)</b>	<b>Plain Milk (250 mL/1 cup)</b>
Sugars (g)	14	12
Sodium (mg)	107	120
Potassium (mg)	36	365
Other nutrients	None	Calcium, protein, vitamins A and D, riboflavin, B12
<b>Sports Recovery</b>	Good	<b>Very Good</b>

## → When is a sport drink appropriate?

Prolonged, vigorous, “elite” (e.g. provincial level soccer player) level sport

### AND

Hot, humid conditions

OR

wearing heavy protective gear (e.g., goalie pads and uniform)

### AND

More than 60-90 minutes without stopping

## References

Brian D. Roy, *Milk: the new sports drink? A Review*, Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition, October 2008

