

# Youth Sports Hydration Guidelines

## Drink on Schedule, Not Just When Thirsty

By [BROOKE DE LENCH](#) Reviewed by [SUSAN YEARGIN, PH.D, ATC](#)

Surprising, as it may seem, the most important part of a youth athlete's diet isn't what they eat, it is what and how much they drink. Drinking water or sports drinks before, during and after sports is especially important for children and pre-teens because they have special fluid needs compared to adults, or even teenagers. As a parent or coach, make sure you take [precautions](#) to prevent [heat illnesses](#) in children and that they follow recommended sports hydration guidelines.

One of the most important functions of water is to cool the body. As a child exercises, his muscles generate heat, raising his body temperature. When the body gets hot, it sweats. The evaporating sweat cools the body. If the child does not replace the water lost through sweating by drinking more fluids, the body's water balance will be upset and the body may overheat.

To keep from becoming [dehydrated](#), your child must drink fluids before, during and after exercise. To promote fluid intake in kids, fluids containing salt (i.e. sports drinks) have been shown to increase voluntary drinking by 90% and prevent dehydration compared to drinking plain water.

To ensure that your child is drinking enough, you should see that she drinks fluids according to the following schedule:

<b>Ages 6 to 12:</b>	<b>Ages 13 to 18:</b>
<b>Before Sports</b> Drinking fluids prior to exercise appears to reduce or delay the detrimental effects of dehydration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 to 2 hours before sports: 4 to 8 ounces of cold water</li><li>• 10 to 15 minutes before sports: 4 to 8 ounces of cold water</li></ul>	<b>Before Sports</b> Drinking fluids prior to exercise appears to reduce or delay the detrimental effects of dehydration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 to 2 hours before sports: 8 to 16 ounces of cold water</li><li>• 10 to 15 minutes before sports: 8 to 12 ounces of cold water</li></ul>
<b>During Sports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Every 20 minutes: 5 to 9 ounces of water or a sports drink, depending on weight (5 for a child weighing 88 pounds, 9 ounces for a child weighing 132 pounds)</li></ul>	<b>During Sports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Every 20 minutes: Between 5 and 10 ounces of water or sports drink, depending on weight</li></ul>
<b>After Sports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post-exercise hydration should aim to correct any fluid lost during the practice.</li><li>• Within two hours: at least 24 ounces of water or a sports drink for every pound of weight lost</li></ul>	<b>After Sports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post-exercise hydration should aim to correct any fluid lost during the practice.</li><li>• Within two hours: at least 24 ounces of water or a sports drink for every pound of weight lost</li></ul>

Read more: <http://www.momsteam.com/nutrition/sports-hydration/fluid-guidelines/fluid-guidelines-for-young-athletes#ixzz3Ua2X5WBa>