



How to Hydrate Your Athlete If They Don't Like Water

If you have a picky athlete who doesn't love the taste of water, or just one who's constantly on the go and bad at remembering to regularly sip from a water bottle, it can be tricky to make sure that he or she is staying consistently and properly hydrated.

Brianna Elliott, MS, RD, LD, shares a few tips for getting young athletes to consume more water throughout the day—even if they claim to 'hate' water.

Pick a Fun Bottle

Sometimes, all it takes to turn your athlete into a great water-drinker is providing the right vessel. "Young athletes should have a reusable water bottle with them throughout the day, even on days when they don't have practice or an event," says Elliott.

Simply finding a bottle that can easily fit in a backpack or gym bag, that won't spill if it's tipped over, and that looks cool can make a big difference in how much your child is drinking. There are thousands to choose from, so let your athlete pick a new favorite.

Make Water More Interesting

"Add flavor to water. Keep it simple by adding some fresh lemon juice, or flavor it up further by adding frozen fruits," says Elliott.

"Berries are a delicious option. Fresh cucumber and mint can also be added to water for a refreshing flavor." Allowing kids to pick their own flavor additions can make creating the perfect water combination more fun.

Find Out What They Hate

In addition to adding flavor, you might have success by simply experimenting with temperature. "Many young athletes are turned off by room temperature water," says Elliott.

"Kids might prefer ice cold water. In this case, a pitcher or cooler of ice-cold water should always be readily available to encourage them to drink whenever possible. In the case that kids prefer hot water, having tea or hot lemon water available will do the trick."

Add Carbonation

Sometimes, a little fizz can go a long way. "I recommend providing beverages with similar tastes to favorites, but that don't have added sugars, so a carbonated beverage like La Croix instead of soda," says Elliott. "And if that's not quite sweet enough, adding a little bit of stevia or honey can add a more natural sweetness, which you can slowly decrease over time."

Dial Back Soda and Juice

Technically, drinking soda or juice is hydrating, but it's not optimal from a nutrition standpoint. But cutting it out entirely can lead to less overall hydration, so it's important to shift to healthier options slowly.

"For kids, it's better to wean them off soda or juice. If a child is used to drinking something, it's hard to cut it out cold-turkey," says Elliot. To do this, water down sugar-sweetened beverages. "Half water, half juice is great," she says. If your child is a soda fanatic, you could consider adding carbonated water to a normal soda to cut sweetness but not the carbonation.

Alternatively, if the half-and-half taste isn't cutting it, compromise. "If a child is unwilling to give up soda or juice, I tell them to have at least half a cup of water before drinking the sweet beverage so that they aren't thirsty when drinking the soda," she says. "It helps them drink less and not drink soda due to thirst."

Add Water-Packed Foods

"Eat water-rich foods throughout the day, such as fruits and veggies," says Elliott.

"Berries, watermelon, mangoes, cucumber, carrots, celery, apples, and cauliflower are examples of water-rich produce. Parents should aim to keep these foods convenient at home, so their kids are more likely to snack on them. Additionally, fresh fruits and veggies should be emphasized as snacks at practices, rather than salty snacks that can be dehydrating."

Make It a Game

Create a reward system for good hydration and make a game out of your athlete's drinking. "Come up with a way for your athlete to track his or her water intake," says Elliott. "Each day that they meet their needs they get a reward. Hydration tracking apps are a great way to do this and can make staying hydrated more fun."

Remember, if you're telling your athlete that he or she needs to drink enough water, you should be drinking enough water as well!

Make sure you're not sipping a soda instead of your water bottle when you show up at practices, and if you're pushing water-filled fruit and vegetable snacks on your child, you should be eating them too.



About TrueSport

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