

## Sports Drinks Explained

There are many different types of “sports” drinks on the market, including sports waters and vitamin waters, most of which are just the result of a lot of clever marketing. When you sift through all of the hype surrounding sports drinks there are only really four types that will assist you pre-competition, during competition or post competition. These are:

**Isotonic-** this is the most widely available sports drink, it comes in a variety of flavours and colours and it is made by all of the major companies. It quickly replaces fluids lost by sweating and supplies a boost of carbohydrate. If in doubt, buy isotonic. Take a few sips before and during competition. To determine if the drink is isotonic check the ingredients. It should have a total carbohydrate content of between 6% and 8% per 100mls. This could be in the form of glucose, dextrose, fructose or any combination.

**Hypotonic-** quickly replaces fluids lost by sweating and is suitable for athletes who need fluid without the boost of carbohydrate. Drink this before events to build up fluids or during events with extreme electrolyte loss (eg long distance running). Ingredients should show less than 5% total carbohydrate.

**Hypertonic-** used to supplement daily carbohydrate intake normally after exercise or at the lunch break. These drinks contain a high percentage of carbohydrates (around 20%) and will take longer to digest. Use hypertonic drinks in conjunction with isotonic drinks to replace fluids during prolonged exercise (eg during a carnival when you have a lot of events, heats and finals etc).

**Recovery-** Some companies are now making a drink which contains high carbohydrates and protein. The protein aids in muscle recovery. This drink is not suitable for quick hydration as the protein needs to be digested.

All of these sports drinks contain relatively high amounts of sodium and some also contain potassium. These are your standard electrolytes and that is fine.

Please note that **any other ingredients** added to the drinks are of little or no benefit and can be seen as marketing ploys to make you think you are getting more than the next brand. Remember, if the drink has too many additives, or the wrong amounts, then they can become a liquid meal and take longer to get into your system - which is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve.

Also, remember that sports drinks are not “every-day” drinks due to the carbohydrate, sodium and other ingredients they can contain. Water is best for that.

**Why not just drink water during sports?** Water is fine during light exercise or training, but during extreme exercise you need to replace your electrolytes. Water can quench your thirst but leave you still dehydrated. Water can also dilute the remaining electrolytes in the body, causing cramping. Too much water can cause bloating. In comparison, the sodium in sports drinks can replace the electrolyte loss and make you drink more - stopping dehydration.

## Want to make your own?

To make 1 litre of sports drink:

**Isotonic** – Mix 150ml of orange juice (concentrate), 850ml of water and two pinches of iodised salt (2g). Keep chilled

**Hypotonic** – Mix 100ml of orange juice (concentrate), 900ml of water and two pinches of iodised salt (2g). Keep chilled.

**Hypertonic** – Mix 300ml of orange juice (concentrate), 700ml of water and two pinches of iodised salt (2g). Keep chilled.

Unlike table salt, iodised salt contains potassium.