



Hydration.

Given the humidity and higher temperatures of Hong Kong, hydration is a no-brainer when it comes to playing football here. This is even more relevant in the summer months. Hydration and fluid intake are essential to improve performance and more importantly to avoid dehydration and heat related illness.

Upon exercising, muscles produce heat that needs to be eliminated. This is done largely via sweating and this helps stop the body from getting too warm. If this fluid is not replaced, there is less water in the system available to help control body temperature. Heat related illness in more serious cases can be life threatening.

As little as 2% loss in body weight by sweating can produce a reduction in on field performance both physically and mentally. Thirst is not a good indicator as most people only begin to feel thirsty when they have lost more than this amount.

Unfortunately by fluid intake we are not referring to beer. Water is generally the easiest and most suitable medium for hydration. Cooler water is absorbed faster. Prior to a game a player should start to increase their hydration about 48 hours out. A general guideline for ADULTS participating in sport is that a player should consume 500ml of water about 30 minutes prior to a game or training. This should then be maintained at about 150-250ml every 15-20 minutes of exercise. During training breaks can be taken to make this fairly easy. However during a game this is less simple. Most games have the ball in play about 65% of the time so players should aim to take in water where possible during any break in play or during an injury stoppage etc. In higher temperatures, playing quarters as opposed to halves may be more advisable.

Drinking more water than what is advised above, is also not necessary as in some cases too much water can be consumed causing excessive dilution of our electrolyte balance, leading to a potentially serious medical condition called hyponatraemia. This is generally in endurance sports and not as relevant in football.

Sports drinks such as Gatorade have some carbohydrate (6%) in them so these are a good option as they are sweeter and more palatable and also provide an energy source. However excessively sweet sports drinks with high levels of carbohydrate can slow the rate at which fluids are absorbed. (Aim for one with 4-8% carbohydrate).

After a game we continue to sweat so continuing to intake fluid is important. A simple way of working out how much to intake is 1.5L of water for every 1kg of body weight lost during a game or training. Scales can be used as a rough measure for this taking body weight before and after a game. Rather than drinking this all at once, the general aim is to be back at your pre match/training weight within 24 hours.

Coffee and beer are both diuretics which lead to more urine being passed from the body so neither of these are any good for hydration purposes.

Generally as an adult, we need about 2-3L of water a day and this does not take into account sporting activity. Drinking from a bottle with marked measurement can help track intake amounts. Urine colour is a fair indicator of hydration. (To note is that multivitamins can make urine darker for a few hours after ingestion) If your urine is pale and clear you are generally well hydrated. If it is dark and strong smelling drink more water!