



Electrolytes

Electrolytes are crucial for our body to transmit nerve impulses and contract muscles and help with water balance as well. The electrolytes that are needed for these functions include sodium, chloride, potassium, magnesium and calcium.

Electrolytes are lost through from the body through sweat, so it is important to replace them. Sodium and potassium are lost in the greatest amounts; magnesium and chloride are lost in small amounts. The more you sweat the more electrolytes you lose. If you are caked in salt after runs or sweat a lot during runs, you are probably losing a fair amount of electrolytes during your workouts and should take care to replace them.

Symptoms of electrolyte imbalance are similar to those of dehydration, since the two often go hand-in-hand. Watch out for muscle cramping, abdominal cramping, light-headedness, nausea, confusion, and muscle spasms.

When you are working out hard enough to sweat a lot, try to drink 1 cup of water every 15 minutes. If the longs are run, consider drinking a sports drink. Sports drinks contain carbohydrate to help fuel your long runs, but contain electrolytes as well. Look for drinks that contain sodium and potassium as well as 14 – 15 grams of carbohydrate per 8 ounces.

A post-workout snack or meal is another good time to replace lost electrolytes. Foods we normally eat contain more electrolytes than sports drinks. For example, a medium banana contains 450 milligrams of potassium, whereas Gatorade provides 30 milligrams per 8 ounces. A post-run meal of 8 ounces of yogurt and a can of chicken noodle soup would replace lost electrolytes.

Ultimately, the best electrolyte replacement is one that you prefer and follow. Remember that both water and electrolytes are lost during workouts and should be replenished.

