

Creating a **Hydration Plan** for a **Better Workout**

By Assata McKenzie



As a personnel trainer and a fitness instructor, I receive many questions from clients about food and beverages and the fuel for an active body – Is this diet better than that diet? How do I get 10 glasses of water in my day? What can I do to stop my afternoon cravings?

Although I cannot control what my clients eat or drink when they are out of the gym, I can help them during their workouts to ensure they are drinking fluids to stay properly hydrated.

Dehydration is a concept we all know and understand to be dangerous to our health. Many of us, including myself, have felt the symptoms of dehydration from time to time – fatigue, dry mouth, muscle cramps, and headaches. But how many of us take the proper hydration seriously enough to ensure we are preventing dehydration in ourselves and in our clients? Our days are often so busy running from clients to classes that we don't take the time to drink enough of the right fluids. As a result, our performance and endurance and those of our clients may be lacking.

Not long ago, I heard a statistic that suggested nearly half of all exercisers arrive at the gym already dehydrated, even before they begin their workout.¹ This statistic was alarming considering can diminish energy and impair performance.

Staying hydrated before, during, and after a workout is so essential to helping our clients perform to their best and maximize their effort during a workout. The reality is that if your clients are dehydrated they will feel tired, have legs that feel like lead or the workout feels harder than normal; and it's not all in their heads. Research suggests that as little as two percent dehydration can cause a drop in endurance² and conversely, exercisers who drink fluid may go 33 percent longer in training than exercisers who don't drink anything.³

So what can we do to ensure our clients drink what they need to perform their best? Here are some tips that I use with my clients:

- **Incorporate fluid breaks into group workouts.** Every 15 minutes or so, I encourage those in my group workouts to take a beverage break. I try to lead by example and take a few gulps myself.
- **Encourage clients to think of fluids as a part of their gym equipment.** When working with a client, I always encourage them to bring a bottle of fluid with them to the workout, as then would a sweat towel. If they forget to bring a water bottle, I make sure we stop by a vending machine or water fountain regularly.

¹ Gatorade Sports Science Institute In-House Study, April 2003.

² Perspectives in Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, Vol 3, 1990, p.15.

³ Fallowfield, JL et al. Journal of Sports Science 14:497-502, 1996.

As fitness experts, it's our responsibility to ensure our clients are working at their best performance level. If we do our job to keep clients properly hydrated, we've done our part to ensuring they get the most out of their workout each and every time. 🍹

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