

Do You Do Sports Drinks

SPORTS NUTRITION SERIES



Briefly: If you are exercising for less than 70 minutes drinks with carbs/sugars will not help. If over 70 minutes it may but in a range of a 1 to 13% improvement. I typically suggest these drinks for long duration events or multi day sports events. Read On:

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DO YOU/CAN YOU
DO THIS?
SHORT WELLNESS
SELF-CHECKS

First of all WHY? Do you think it will give you an edge? Many people, especially athletes, use sports drinks. Most of these drinks contain simple sugars, which are exactly like or similar to table sugar. Some drinks have maltodextrin, which is a link of several glucose units (a simple sugar which is the primary fuel source for humans). But do they work? Many believe that they have an ergogenic (improve performance) effect when ingested in the proximity of or during a performance of a bout exercise. A systematic review of many studies in 2013 found a mixed general picture about the ergogenic effect of carbohydrates ingested in the proximity of or during exercise performance bout with no benefits up to 70 minutes and a possible but not compelling ergogenic effect with performance durations longer than about 70 min ([review](#)). The review found 17 studies showed no improvements in performance in half of the studies. In the other half, improvements ranged from 1–13%.

So what does this mean. If you are exercising for less than 70 minutes drinks with carbs/sugars will not help. If over 70 minutes it may but in a range of a 1 to 13% improvement. I typically suggest these drinks for long duration events or multi day sports events. For sustained energy, your best bet is to simply eat an easily digested pre-exercise meal or snack and then, after the first hour, consume 200 to 350 calories of easily tolerated carbohydrate per hour of endurance exercise with water. I personally like bananas, cliff bars, or dried fruit.

After exercise, it is important to consume carbohydrate to replenish muscle carbohydrate stores (glycogen). When athletes exercise with depleted glycogen stores they are unable to exercise at a very high intensity. I suggest to focus on the basic fueling practices that contribute to not only strong performance but good health. These include eating breakfast, following a healthy eating pattern, fueling up and refueling before and after workouts with foods that have carbs, fats, and protein, and staying well hydrated. Set a good foundation like this and work from there.