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[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

Your Sweat Rate: How to Check It and Why It Matters

When I work with any athlete, one of the first questions I ask is, "what is your sweat rate?" Ninety-five percent of the time, I get a blank stare. When creating a performance nutrition plan, knowing your sweat rate is critical to make sure fluid replacement during exercise is adequate (but not too high). Here is why.

The Importance of Water

Water plays major roles in the body at any given time, but especially during exercise. During exercise, water inside your body cools your core and muscles, keeping you from overheating too quickly. This helps you perform stronger and longer. In addition, water transports nutrients to your muscle for use in exercise metabolism and then cleans up by transporting metabolites away from your muscle to be filtered and excreted. Water plays a key role in preventing dehydration, which also keeps the athlete mentally "on" throughout the workout. Finally, water acts as a cushion to your organs to protect them in case of impact during sports.



Why You Should Know Your Sweat Rate

What I refer to as a sweat rate is defined as exactly how much water an athlete loses per hour of exercise. It is important to know your number because sweat rates vary widely from athlete to athlete. Females generally range from 2-5 cups per hour and males range from 4-7 cups per hour. However, variables such as air temperature, humidity and amount/type of clothing can change sweat rate day to day. Once I know an athlete's sweat rate that tells me how much fluid per hour we need to replace during exercise.

How to Calculate Sweat Rate

To figure out your sweat rate, pick a workout that is at least one hour long. Weigh yourself before and after that workout. Do not pee during the workout (unless you want to measure it), and keep track of how much fluid you take in during that workout. After the workout ends, take a look at how much weight you lost compared to how much fluid you drank. If your weights are about the same before and after, the amount of fluid you drank matched how much fluid you lost in sweat. If, however, your weight dropped during the workout, you did not drink enough fluid and need to increase your intake next time. By using this simple method, you can easily estimate your sweat rate. When doing this test, it is a good idea to note temperature and humidity during the test for future reference. Be sure to do separate biking and running tests, as most athletes have a different rate for each.

So, get to work! Figure out that sweat rate so you can replace fluids adequately to fit your individual needs this season.

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