

How to Prevent Dehydration and Low Electrolytes

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From mild fatigue to life-threatening complications, dehydration and electrolyte imbalances can sneak up on anyone — especially during hot weather, illness, or intense physical activity. Understanding how to stay hydrated and maintain proper electrolyte levels is essential for your health and well-being.

What Is Dehydration?

Dehydration occurs when your body loses more fluids than it takes in. This can happen due to:

- Hot weather or heat exposure
- Intense exercise
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or fever
- Certain medications or illnesses
- Not drinking enough water



Even mild dehydration can cause symptoms like headache, dry mouth, fatigue, and dizziness. Severe dehydration can lead to confusion, low blood pressure, rapid heartbeat — and even organ failure.

What Are Electrolytes, and Why Do They Matter?

Electrolytes are minerals in your body that carry an electric charge. The key electrolytes include:



- Sodium
- Potassium
- Magnesium
- Calcium
- Chloride
- Phosphate



These minerals are vital for:

- Muscle contractions (including your heart)
- Nerve signaling
- Fluid balance
- Blood pressure regulation
- pH balance

When you lose fluids (through sweat, illness or urination), you also lose electrolytes. Drinking only plain water without replacing lost electrolytes — especially during prolonged exertion or illness — can lead to an imbalance.

Prevention Strategies

1. Hydrate Consistently — Not Just When You're Thirsty

- Aim for half your body weight in ounces of water daily (e.g., 150 lbs = ~75 oz).
- Sip water regularly throughout the day, not just during meals or workouts.
- Increase intake during hot weather or exercise.

2. Add Electrolytes — Especially When at Risk

- Use electrolyte-enhanced water, tablets, or powders (look for low-sugar versions).
- Natural options: coconut water, a pinch of sea salt and lemon in water, or diluted fruit juices.
- Sports drinks are no longer recommended as they often contain added sugars and dyes.

3. Eat Hydrating and Electrolyte-Rich Foods

- Potassium-rich foods: bananas, avocados, sweet potatoes, spinach
- Magnesium-rich foods: nuts, seeds, leafy greens, legumes
- Sodium: lightly salted whole foods; not excessive processed foods
- Calcium: yogurt, cheese, leafy greens, fortified plant milks

4. Be Cautious During Illness

- At the first sign of vomiting or diarrhea, focus on small sips of fluids with electrolytes.
- Oral rehydration solutions (ORS) can be life-saving — especially for children and the elderly.

Know the Signs of Trouble

Symptoms of low electrolytes include:

- Muscle cramps or spasms
- Irregular heartbeat
- Nausea
- Tingling or numbness
- Mental fog or confusion

If these occur — especially after fluid loss or in hot environments — seek medical attention promptly.

Tips for staying Hydrated

Dehydration isn't just caused by not drinking enough water—it can also be influenced by what we eat and

drink. Knowing which foods and beverages support hydration—and which may hinder it—can make a big difference in how you feel, especially in hot weather or during physical activity.

Foods and Drinks That May Contribute to Dehydration:

Some everyday items can increase fluid loss or disrupt your body's water balance. These include:



- ⊗ Coffee, black and green teas, energy drinks, and other high-caffeine beverages
- ⊗ Alcohol (beer, wine, spirits)
- ⊗ Salty foods like chips, cured meats, canned soups, and fast food
- ⊗ Sugary items such as soda, candy, and sweetened lattes
- ⊗ Processed meats and high-protein foods like jerky or protein bars, especially packaged and processed meals with high sodium and low water content
- ⊗ Spicy dishes that cause you to sweat more. If it's hot or you are ill, it is unwise to consume these. In addition, increase your water intake or balance them with more hydrating foods.



Naturally Hydrating Foods and Drinks:

Support hydration with foods that are high in water and rich in essential electrolytes. Great options include:

- Fruits such as watermelon, strawberries, oranges, and melons (cantaloupe, honeydew)
- Water-rich vegetables like cucumbers, lettuce, celery, radishes, zucchini, tomatoes, and bell peppers
- Herbal teas (like chamomile or mint), coconut water, and low-sodium broths (especially good if sick).

These foods not only hydrate but also offer valuable nutrients for overall wellness.



Tips for Staying Hydrated with Food

- Add **cucumbers or citrus** to water for flavor and nutrients.
- Start meals with a **raw veggie salad** or **broth-based soup**.
- Blend fruits into **smoothies** with coconut water or herbal tea as the base.
- Snack on **melon cubes or berries** in warm weather.

Recipes

Homemade natural electrolyte drinks can be just as effective and likely healthier than store-bought versions—without the added sugars, artificial flavors, or preservatives. Here are some healthy and natural electrolyte drink recipes using whole-food ingredients that provide sodium, potassium, magnesium and natural sugars for optimal hydration.

1. Coconut Citrus Electrolyte Drink

Ingredients:

- 2 cups coconut water (natural source of potassium & sodium)
- 1 cup cold water
- Juice of 1 lemon or lime
- 1–2 tsp raw honey or maple syrup
- 1/8 tsp sea salt (adds sodium and trace minerals)

Instructions: Mix all ingredients together and chill. Shake before drinking.
Great for light hydration after exercise or time in the sun.



2. Orange Turmeric Electrolyte Refresher

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh orange juice (natural source of potassium & vitamin C)
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder (anti-inflammatory bonus)
- Pinch of black pepper (boosts turmeric absorption)
- Optional: 1 tsp raw honey

Instructions: Whisk all ingredients until well blended. Serve over ice or chill in fridge.

Supports hydration and inflammation control post-workout or during illness.

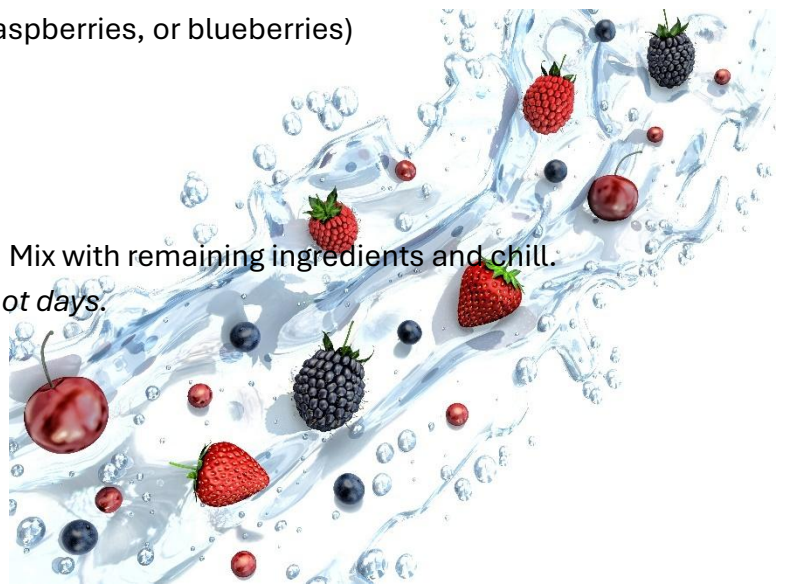
3. Berry-Lime Electrolyte Cooler

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh or frozen berries (strawberries, raspberries, or blueberries)
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 cups water
- 1–2 tsp raw honey
- 1/8 tsp Himalayan salt

Instructions: Blend the berries and strain if desired. Mix with remaining ingredients and chill.

A refreshing, antioxidant-rich electrolyte boost for hot days.



4. Cucumber-Mint Mineral Water

Ingredients:

- 1/2 medium cucumber, sliced
- 3–4 fresh mint leaves
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1/8 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp maple syrup (optional)
- 2 cups filtered water or sparkling mineral water

Instructions: Muddle cucumber and mint, mix with other ingredients, and let sit in the fridge 30 minutes.

Cooling and hydrating; great for digestion too.

★5. Basic Homemade Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS)

(For mild dehydration from illness or heat)

Ingredients:

- 1 quart (4 cups) clean water
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 2 tbsp raw honey or organic sugar
- Juice of 1/2 lemon or orange

Instructions: Stir everything together until dissolved. Sip slowly throughout

the day. *A WHO-inspired rehydration solution with clean, whole ingredients.*



Final Thoughts

Dehydration and electrolyte imbalance aren't just concerns for athletes — they can affect anyone. By staying mindful of your fluid and mineral intake, especially during times of stress, heat or illness, you can support energy, focus, physical performance and overall health.