

# ELECTROLYTES

## *Fitness*

### **Electrolytes**

Electrolytes are minerals involved in regulating muscle and nerve function, blood pressure and hydration. This sounds important because it is – our body requires electrolytes: **Sodium, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium and Phosphorous**. But, the lingering question is: how much and how often?

Electrolyte drinks are generally marketed as the perfect way to rehydrate and reenergize after exercise. Athletes, both recreational and professional are told that replenishing electrolytes is critical to performance. And, while we do need electrolytes, the way in which they are packaged commercially is certainly not the best source.

When you lose fluids, a healthy adult often simply needs to just replace fluids; eating whole foods will take care of the small amount of electrolytes lost. However, if there is sufficient loss of electrolytes through profuse sweating, distance exercise (especially in heat), electrolyte levels are generally impacted and the need for replacement is more significant. Sports drinks are often promoted because they replace both carbohydrates and fluids lost during exercise, but this often comes with food coloring, chemicals and added sources of sugar or artificial sweetener. So, here are some simple strategies for replacing electrolytes without commercial drinks.

### **Easy (*and easy to digest*) electrolyte replacement drink**

2 cups of water or unsweetened coconut water with juice of 1 citrus fruit (lemon, lime, orange)  
1/8 teaspoon of salt  
sweetener, if desired ( ½ -1 teaspoon of honey, maple or agave OR 2 Tablespoons chopped pitted dates)

Blend all ingredients together. Makes 2 servings. Can be stored for 5 days refrigerated.

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### **Eat whole foods**

Below you will see a list (in no specific order) of foods rich in electrolytes. Select your favorite combinations of these whole foods as post workout snacks to help replace electrolytes. Most of our diets are more than sufficient in sodium, but for excessive fluid loss, add a pinch of salt to any of these foods to replace lost sodium.

#### **Potassium rich foods**

Avocado  
Dark leafy greens  
Orange  
Sweet potato  
Banana  
Yogurt  
White beans  
Cooked tomato  
Edamame

#### **Magnesium rich foods**

Avocado  
Dark leafy greens  
Black beans  
Figs  
Banana  
Yogurt  
Almonds

#### **Calcium rich foods**

Dark leafy greens  
Edamame  
Broccoli  
Oranges  
Figs  
White Beans  
Sardines  
Yogurt  
Almonds

#### **Phosphorus rich foods**

Pumpkin seeds  
Flax seeds  
Nuts  
Dairy  
Eggs  
Fish  
Poultry  
Beans

### **Use whole foods to replace lost electrolytes**

#### **Electrolyte-rich smoothie**

1 orange, peeled  
½ frozen banana  
1 cup organic spinach or kale  
1 cup water or unsweetened coconut water  
2 Tablespoons ground almonds  
pinch of salt, optional

Blend and adjust liquid as needed.

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## **Electrolyte-powered salad**

- 1 cup leafy greens such as kale or spinach
- ½ cup shelled edamame
- ¼ avocado, sliced
- 1 orange, peeled, segments
- 2 Tablespoons pumpkin seeds
- 1 boiled egg OR 3 ounces cooked fish or chicken, optional
- pinch of kosher salt, optional

Toss all ingredients together and enjoy this food based electrolyte rich salad!

*As a comparison, without any egg or added meat, this salad has: 29.86mg magnesium, 146.84mg Calcium, 160mg sodium (120mg of which is from the optional pinch of salt), 18.36mg Phosphorus, 677.53mg Potassium. Commercial electrolyte drinks generally focus on sodium and potassium, a 12 oz serving of a commonly used drink has, by comparison contains: 160mg Sodium, 45mg Potassium.*

**Bottom Line: Eating a varied diet and drinking water is generally a sufficient way to replace lost electrolytes for most healthy adults. For sweating from intense exercise generally over 60 minutes and especially in warmer weather, use the suggestions above to make your own electrolyte-rich drink.**

*\*\* Note: the information and recipes provided are not a substitute for medical advice. Any significant fluid loss, especially that accompanies illness should be handled immediately with your medical provider.*

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