



## **Cold Weather Exercise and Hydration**

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Exercising in the cold weather presents some unique challenges. Anyone that is active during the winter needs to take precautions to stay safe and comfortable to perform at their best.

Proper nutrition and hydration is necessary for optimum performance in cold weather. In warm weather, it is easy to know when you need hydration because of the sweat we produce to regulate our body temperature. In the winter, we need to produce more heat to keep our body warm.

In cold weather, our body temperature drops. We need to increase our body's metabolism to stay warm. We also lose a significant amount of water through breathing cold air. The cold air needs to be moistened and warmed as we breathe. Thus, we burn more calories. The body's mechanism for thirst is reduced in cold weather therefore, during winter activities we need to consciously drink more fluids to replace the fluid that we lose through breathing the cold air. Replacing lost fluids and having proper hydration is one of the biggest nutritional needs during winter exercise. Dehydration is one of the main reasons that a person's performance during athletics in winter decreases.

When it comes to nutrition during cold weather exercise, warm or hot foods are ideal. The problem with cold foods is that it can chill the core temperature of the body. In the summer, cold foods have a cooling effect, but in the winter hot foods are the best choice. It is also important to eat often to help replace the carbohydrates that are being used for exercise and warming. If you don't replace this energy, you may become fatigued and/or chilled. Children get hungrier more often, but also fatigue quicker.

Recommendations for cold weather nutrition:

- Drink plenty of water (preferred) or energy drinks.
- Plan to eat a small snack every 35 to 45 minutes.
- Eat warm or hot food when possible.
- Decrease caffeine consumption.
- Eat a variety of high carbohydrate foods.
- Don't drink alcohol; it only increases heat loss because it dilates the blood vessels.

Plan ahead; bring trail mix, chocolate bars, energy bars, or something that you like and will eat. Get out and enjoy the winter!