

# Hydration

**Notes from the Athlete's Convenor:** The outdoor season has kicked off and we are entering into what is shaping up to be a long hot summer. I want to cover some of the basics as a reminder to those seasoned archers and also inform new and junior archers.

## Hydration

If we are doing all day tournaments, many of us are out there for the better part of 6 hours, maybe longer. Fluids are extremely important!

Hypo-hydration or dehydration (total body water below normal) impairs the body's ability to regulate heat through sweating, resulting in increased body temperature and an elevated heart rate. Heart rate is something we need to control during archery. Perceived exertion from this faster heart rate causes the archer to feel more fatigued than usual. Mental function is also reduced, which can have negative implications for our motor control, decision making and concentration. Negative effects have been detected when fluid deficits are as low as 2%.

When we talk about fluids we are not talking about the coffee or tea you may have had or the other drinks containing caffeine, or even the beer or wine or soft drinks you may have consumed the night before. We are talking water or electrolyte/isotonic drinks (sports drinks).

The good news is that by drinking regularly during any type of exercise, athletes can prevent the declines in concentration and skill level, improve perceived exertion, prevent excessive elevations in heart rate and body temperature and improve their performance.

So how much do we need to drink? This can vary widely. Bigger people need more than smaller people, fitter people tend to sweat earlier and more, some people just sweat more than others, humidity causes more fluid loss, higher air temperature will cause more fluid loss and so on. Then we add in how much in the way of fluid filled foods you have eaten (fruits & vegetables) and how many dehydrating beverages you have consumed. So it is not as easy as saying "8 glasses of water a day".

I would suggest that the first thing you do on the morning of a shoot is drink some water. Do this before you have your coffee or tea so you rehydrate the body from the night before. Drink before shooting and then take regular sips of water or sports drinks during the competition rather than trying to load up again during lunch. If you start to feel headachy, tired, get cramps, your urine is darker in colour or you stop sweating, then you need to drink more.

Electrolyte drinks or sports drinks are also good if it is hot as they will provide you with some essential sodium and potassium which you will be losing. Try to avoid the very sweet ones which are high in sugars. If you don't want to spend lots of money on electrolyte drinks then you can make your own. 1 litre of filtered water, ¼ tsp sea salt and ½ tsp of raw honey. Let it dissolve and Voilà! You have an

electrolyte drink. Don't forget to continue to re-hydrate at the end of the day – especially if you have another day of shooting coming up.

## Wear Sunscreen!

Even if it is overcast or the day starts out as wet – make sure you have your sunscreen on or at least with you. Weather can change over the course of the day and we should all know by now just how harsh our sun is. I find the gel based ones good as they do not leave your hands slippery, compromising your grip. You can also look at some of the brands of "Compression Clothing". These can keep you warm or cool depending on the weather, help with circulation and getting oxygen to the muscles and they can also keep the sun off your arms which are hanging out there in it all day! Most brands come in white which is better for reflecting the heat.

## Food

Food is a very individual thing and very dependent on an individual's metabolism, activity levels, genetics and so forth. Keep it simple: think about having a good breakfast in the morning, such as eggs on toast, beans on toast, omelette, protein shake, cereal fruit and yogurt, but not the big breakfast you may be attracted to especially if you have travelled to a tournament.

Take some snacks with you like dried fruit and nuts, muesli bars that don't contain too much sugar or fat, fruit that is easy to eat (bananas, berries, stone fruit, apples etc). Try to avoid getting into the high sugar snacks early in the day as your energy will spike up and run out quickly. Keep these for the afternoon if you are starting to fade. I find before 30m is a good time for me – some jet planes, snakes or some dark chocolate to lift me until the end.

Take lunch. It doesn't sound hard, but rather than race around at lunchtime trying to find somewhere that has what you feel like, make your own the night before or in the morning. Make sure it is not a BIG lunch otherwise all your energy goes into digesting it after lunch leaving you feeling tired and sluggish. Snacking during the shooting helps keep lunch to a moderate size that will be digested efficiently. One thing to be aware of is not to eat things you don't normally eat when you are training or shooting at your home range. Food your body is familiar with is the safest bet.

Finally the most important thing – **HAVE FUN!**

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