**Summer Wellness Series Part 1 of 3 -**

**The Power of Hydration - and the Rise of Electrolyte Supplements**

Summer is almost here - although day to day it’s hard to determine what season we’re in, let’s go with what the calendar tells us. Based on what we’re accustomed to, a New England summer tends to be extremely hot in August. That’s when advice on increasing fluid intake to “beat the heat” is most available. Our Summer Wellness Series addresses this topic first, not only to set the groundwork for extreme temperatures, but to focus on the lesser known year round benefits. Over the next 3 months, we will feature a different topic. Each significant on its own, yet very much connected to the others, in order to help you win with your health the whole year through. To start, let’s check out the world of hydration and electrolytes.

Water, the “elixir of life,” holds incredible benefits for the body beyond just exercise. The advantages are for everyone regardless of whether or not you hit the gym regularly. Hydration isn’t just for health and fitness enthusiasts, it’s essential for everyone’s well-being. Proper hydration keeps the body cool, aids in proper digestion, boosts brain function, supports healthy skin, and even aids in weight management. Water is involved in joint lubrication and nutrient transportation. Just like a well watered garden flourishes, the body thrives when properly hydrated.

To ensure we’re maximizing water intake, there are several strategies we can follow.

Consume water frequently throughout the day rather than large amounts in a short period

Add some lemon or other fruit to add flavor which can lead to better intake

Be mindful of water quality. While tap water is generally safe for drinking, it may contain impurities that affect taste and potentially hinder absorption. Using a water filter or opting for bottled water can help. *Tip: rather than a case of smaller bottles, buy gallons to fill your own water bottle*

Consume fruits and vegetables high in water content like watermelon, cucumber, cantaloupe and zuchini.

Note that cold water tends to be absorbed more quickly, while warmer water might be more comfortable to drink. However, finding a balance that suits preference and facilitates consumption is key.

Avoid excessive amounts of caffeine and alcohol that can act as diuretics. Similarly, certain medications or medical conditions may impact water absorption and retention

Know that there may be times when drinking water alone is not enough

In recent years, electrolyte supplements have surged in popularity, promising to replenish vital minerals and enhance hydration. Their rising popularity reflects the growing awareness of the importance of electrolyte balance. These supplements come in various forms, such as powders, tablets, and liquid drops, making them convenient for different lifestyles. But what sets them apart, and should we consider incorporating them into our hydration routine?

Electrolytes are minerals like sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, which play crucial roles in our body’s fluid balance and nerve function. Electrolyte supplements, when used correctly, can help replenish these essential minerals and enhance hydration, especially during periods of intense activity, hot weather, or illness. My husband, who is a baseball umpire, learned the hard way to always add electrolyte supplements to his water bottle. Doing games in intense heat, sometimes two in a row while in full uniform, he always had plenty of water with him but electrolytes are lost through sweat and when loss is severe, can bring about unpleasant symptoms that water alone won’t help. Electrolytes are like the body’s own personal hydrating system, keeping us in balance and performing at our best.

As with anything else, not all electrolyte supplements are created equal so it’s important to choose wisely. Opt for products that are free from artificial additives, sweeteners, and excessive amounts of sugar. Seek out supplements that contain a balanced mix of electrolytes, preferably in a bioavailable form for optimal absorption. Read labels and look for trusted (not necessarily popular) brands that prioritize quality and transparency, and consider consulting a healthcare professional if you have specific dietary restrictions or medical conditions.

Beware of electrolyte supplements that claim magical cures or promise extreme results. Avoid products with *excessive* sodium or potassium levels, as they can be harmful if taken without proper guidance. Steer clear of supplements with artificial colors, flavors, and unnecessary additives. By selecting high-quality products and avoiding unnecessary additives, we can unlock the benefits of electrolyte supplementation and amplify our hydration game. Remember, moderation and balance are key when it comes to electrolyte supplementation.

Hydration holds incredible benefits, fueling our bodies with vitality and nourishment. Whether you’re an avid gym-goer or not, staying properly hydrated is essential for optimal health at any age and for all activity levels. So, let’s raise a glass to the power of hydration. Cheers to refreshed and balanced days ahead!

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