

Alcohol and Athlete Performance

Athlete Scenario

I transferred to a new college this year and joined the intramural basketball team. After games and on weekends team members go out for drinks and a good time. While I enjoy socializing, I wonder if drinking is affecting my game. Before I started drinking, I didn't notice problems with stamina. Now I get winded easily and am more prone to muscle cramps. Is this normal, or could alcohol affect my game?

Nutrition Goals

- Fully rehydrate and refuel post-exercise before considering drinking alcohol.
- Maintain social life without compromising training and competition goals.
- When choosing alcohol, follow the guidelines of moderation: 1-2 drinks per day for men, 1 drink per day for women. One "drink" equals 12 oz of regular beer (150 calories), 5 oz wine (100 calories), or 1.5 oz of 80-proof liquor (100 calories).

Challenges

Alcohol intake:

- Acts as a diuretic by increasing urine volume and interfering with rehydration
- Puts athletes at risk for dehydration, heat illness, and muscle cramping
- Suppresses fat use as a fuel during exercise
- Interferes with post-exercise recovery by delaying carbohydrate repletion and muscle repair
- Increases the risk for nutrient deficiencies by decreasing vitamin and mineral absorption
- Adds calories and acts as an appetite stimulant which can result in increased calories consumed
- Can interfere with sleep patterns by reducing time spent in deep, restful sleep

Written by SCAN registered dietitians (RDs). The key to optimal meal planning for athletes is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing "Find a SCAN Dietitian" at www.scandpg.org | 800.249.2875.



Tips to Take With You

1. Rehydrate and re-fuel post-exercise before considering consuming alcohol. Sports drinks promote rehydration. See the SCAN Exercise Hydration fact sheet for more information.
2. If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, follow recommended guidelines above.
3. Discuss your training goals with friends; ask them to support your decision to limit alcohol. Engage in activities that do not include alcohol.

Contact SCAN

Web site: www.scandpg.org

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