

British  
Gymnastics



ENGLISH  
INSTITUTE  
OF SPORT

# Hydration

British Gymnastics Best Practice Guidance

V1: April 2022

**British Gymnastics has developed the following position statement in conjunction with the English Institute of Sport. After reading this document, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact British Gymnastics Integrity team.**

Hydration is essential for a variety of functions that can impact health and performance.

## **Key recommendations**

1. Encourage and educate gymnasts to check their hydration status daily. This can be done by checking urine colour, urine smell, urination frequency and volume (**see hydration infographic for more information**).
2. Gymnasts should consume fluids alongside food regularly throughout the day for optimal preparation for training sessions. A good way to do this is to drink at every meal and regularly throughout the day. Avoid drinking large volumes before going to bed so sleep is not affected.
3. Ensure gymnasts always have their own individual water bottle at training and promote drinking at regular intervals or when necessary. Allow time during a training session for a gymnast to refuel if required.
4. Make sure gymnasts rehydrate after training to replace fluids lost through sweat. This is a key element of the recovery strategy which also includes refuelling and repairing the muscles.
5. Different fluid options can be best utilised at certain time points of the day, and around training. For example, milk post training for recovery; water or squash for hydration during training (**see hydration infographic for more information**).
6. Normalise using the toilet during training sessions, as well as any discussions regarding pelvic health and strategies to minimise discomfort for the athlete.
7. Hydration best practices should be followed throughout the year, if you require further advice, seek additional support from qualified practitioners (GP's, Nutritionist etc).
8. Extra consideration around training should be taken for gymnasts fasting for religious reasons, as gymnasts are unable to rehydrate until breaking fast. Clubs are encouraged to liaise with parents/guardians (where appropriate) and gymnasts during this time, and seek additional support from qualified practitioners (GPs, Nutritionist etc) if required.

## Health and performance benefits of hydration

- Increases energy levels by helping transport nutrients to working muscles and the removal of waste products
- Optimises muscle strength and power
- Improves brain function and concentration
- Regulates body temperature
- Enhances recovery
- Reduces risk of injury – directly and indirectly
- Reduces risk of illness

## World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) practices

The following information highlights the practices of the WCPP in regard to gymnasts and hydration.

1. Members of national squads are encouraged and educated to check their hydration status daily. At home this can be done by checking urine colour, urine smell, urination frequency and volume (**see hydration infographic for more information**). At national squad camps, junior and senior gymnasts are advised to check their hydration status every morning using an osmometer and follow the recommended strategies to achieve optimal hydration.
2. At the National Training Centre, there are fridges in each gym where gymnasts are welcome to store their own food and drink. Gymnasts also have access to drinking water whilst onsite.
3. Gymnasts can choose to weigh themselves before and after training to calculate their rehydration requirement to aid their recovery. As a guide gymnast should replace 1.5 litres of fluid for every kg of body weight lost.
4. Practical advice is given to gymnasts to minimise dehydration during travel. This includes travelling with two water bottles, one for fluid intake and the other to act as an ice pack for chilling food and fluid items.
5. The sports science and medical team also carry nutritional supplies whilst travelling such as electrolyte tablets and energy bars.
6. Gymnasts may choose to follow an individualised strategy around training and competition as discussed with an appropriate practitioner. For example, keeping well hydrated through the day and following gymnastics, but not drinking large volumes of fluid in the 1-2 hours before to minimise toilet use and discomfort.