

ENERGY BARS AND DRINKS - There is Nothing Magical!

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A common question posed to Sport Nutritionists is, "Are energy bars and sport drinks good for you?" The follow up question is typically, "Should I use them?".

The response - These products are not magical. They should not take the place of food and other fluids on a regular basis. However, they can play a positive role in an athlete's diet providing they are not over used. The table below provides the following information about the energy bars and drinks and it will allow you to compare the content of different products:

- ◆ Major Source of Carbohydrate (CHO)
- ◆ Carbohydrate Content
- ◆ Protein Content
- ◆ Fat Content
- ◆ Sodium Content
- ◆ Potassium Content

Sport Drinks

Sport drinks contain water, carbohydrate, sodium, potassium and flavouring. These drinks may be beneficial to those exercising for greater than 60-90 minutes during one exercise bout. They are particularly beneficial in endurance activities where it would be beneficial to have a carbohydrate and fluid source during the event. For example, during a marathon. They may also benefit athletes participating in multiple events during a single day. For example, during a soccer tournament when there is more than one game per day.

Many athletes will consume a sport drink post exercise as they feel it will restore their energy more quickly than food. The fact is, consuming water and carbohydrate in a solid form is just as effective in restoring muscle glycogen as consuming a liquid form of carbohydrate.

Often young athletes will be seen consuming sport drinks during their exercise bouts. During their activity, many of these athletes do not need the additional carbohydrate, sodium or potassium that is found in a sport drink. However, one consideration is that the athlete may drink a larger volume of fluid when consuming a sport drink than they would if it was just plain water. In this situation, if the drink contributes positively to the athlete's hydration status it may ultimately improve their athletic performance. While consuming the same volume of plain water would have provided the same benefit, research indicates that athletes drink more if they enjoy the taste of the fluid. One suggestion may be to just save the bottle from the sport drink and refill it with water for future exercise bouts!

DRINKS	Nutritional Information						
	Product	Major Source of CHO	CHO	Protein	Fat	Sodium	Potassium
	Gatoraide 250ml	sucrose, glucose, fructose	16g	0	0	110mg	32mg
	Powerade 250 ml	sucrose, glucose, fructose	22g	0	0	32mg	35mg
	Boost Nutritional Shake 1can 237ml	corn syrup, sucrose	41g	10g	4g	253mg	409mg
	Carnation 1can 295ml	skim milk powder, sucrose	41g	15g	8.8g	N/A	N/A
	Hansen's Energy Drink 250ml	liquid sugar, juice	27g	0	0	0	0