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Hydration for Indoor Trainer Rides

Unlocking peak performance and maximizing your training gains (and fun) on the indoor trainer begins with a fundamental element often overlooked – proper hydration. In this article, we delve into the essential strategies for staying adequately hydrated during your indoor cycling sessions, ensuring you feel good all ride long.

Why Hydration Matters

Water and fluids are essential for life, performance, and energy levels on and off the bike. Ever felt groggy and a bit dizzy partway through your indoor ride? Come down with a headache a few hours after your ride? These may be signs that you were not meeting your body's fluid needs during or after your ride. Water and fluids are important for cognitive function, body heat management, nutrient transport, digestion, metabolic function, joint lubrication, and more. When an athlete has an optimal amount of fluids on board, their body and mind work and perform more effectively. When an athlete DOESN'T have enough fluids they can run into issues such as feeling foggy, dizziness, inability to go hard or long during workouts, overheating, nausea, headaches, and muscle cramps.

Even a Small Amount of Dehydration Can Impair Indoor Riding Performance

In the pursuit of peak performance during indoor cycling sessions, riders often underestimate the significant impact even a minor degree of dehydration can have on their abilities. The [National Athletic Trainers' Association](#) states that athletes should not

exceed 2% loss of body weight from fluid during exercise, as this may impair performance and compromise safety. For reference, this is like losing 3lbs of sweat for 150lb athlete. Athletes typically lose 1-2 lbs of sweat per hour, but some athletes can lose up to 4+ lbs per hour. However, researchers who published a study in Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise in 2013 found that only 1% body weight loss impaired performance during indoor cycling of 10 trained male cyclists.

Many cyclists train in hot and humid conditions while inside, especially if they don't have proper airflow from a fan or an open window. Lack of airflow can put greater thermal strain on the athlete making it more difficult to ride at the same intensity inside compared to outside. Keeping close tabs on hydration, particularly on indoor rides, can help athletes boost energy levels and performance.

How Much and What to Drink

Good hydration starts with making sure the athlete is well hydrated going into their ride. If the athlete is already dehydrated, this will put greater strain on their body's ability to sweat, and therefore cool down, which may lead to poor performance. Two helpful indicators that an athlete is well hydrated include they aren't thirsty and their urine is the color of pale lemonade. If they are thirsty or their urine is darker than pale lemonade, they may benefit from drinking more fluids pre-ride.

The National Athletic Trainers' Association recommendations for during activity hydration include drinking when thirsty and drinking enough to not exceed 2% body weight loss from sweat. As mentioned above, this could be even less than 1% for an indoor cycling session. A good rule of thumb is to drink 4-8oz every 10-15 minutes. If an athlete is in a bigger body (larger surface area) and is a heavy sweater, they are likely on the higher end of fluid needs. If an athlete is in a smaller body and a lighter sweater, they may need less fluids to replace sweat losses. Sports drinks often contain carbohydrates and electrolytes like sodium which help to pull fluid into the cell and keep the athlete hydrated and energized during the indoor trainer session.

The Bottom Line

Staying on top of hydration before and during indoor trainer rides will boost performance and energy levels on the bike as the body may be even more sensitive to dehydration during indoor rides compared to outdoor rides. Make sure to drink when you're thirsty and consider a sports drink during rides to replace both fluids and electrolytes lost from sweat and energize your ride.