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**DID YOU KNOW** that staying hydrated improves athletic performance? Your body actually works better when you are drinking enough fluids. Your heart and muscles work more efficiently when you are replacing all the fluids that you lose when you exercise. Even if you don't feel you are sweating a lot, or are involved with cold weather sports or swimming, your muscles are still generating a lot of heat that leads to fluid loss. It is very important for you to give your body what it needs before, during and after exercise, so that you are safe, and will be able to perform to your maximal potential.

Before you even start your exercise or event, you should prepare your body. It is important to drink at least 8 to 12 ounces of water 1 to 2 hours before exercise, and eat a healthy snack to provide your body with the healthy sugars and salts that your body will need. During exercise, you should be drinking every 15 to 20 minutes. It is important to drink water to replace all of the fluids that you are losing. Do not wait until you are thirsty! If you are thirsty, it means your body is already behind in its fluids. If you are exercising for a prolonged period of time (over 45 minutes), you need to remember to replace some of the salts that your body is losing with a sports drink. Sports drinks are better than soft drinks as they have the correct balance of salts, without too much sugar. It is a good idea to alternate between water and sports drinks if you will be exercising for a long period of time.

After exercise, you need to replenish your fuel. A healthy snack with some water replaces the energy stores you have used, as well as giving your body the fluids, salts and minerals that it needs.

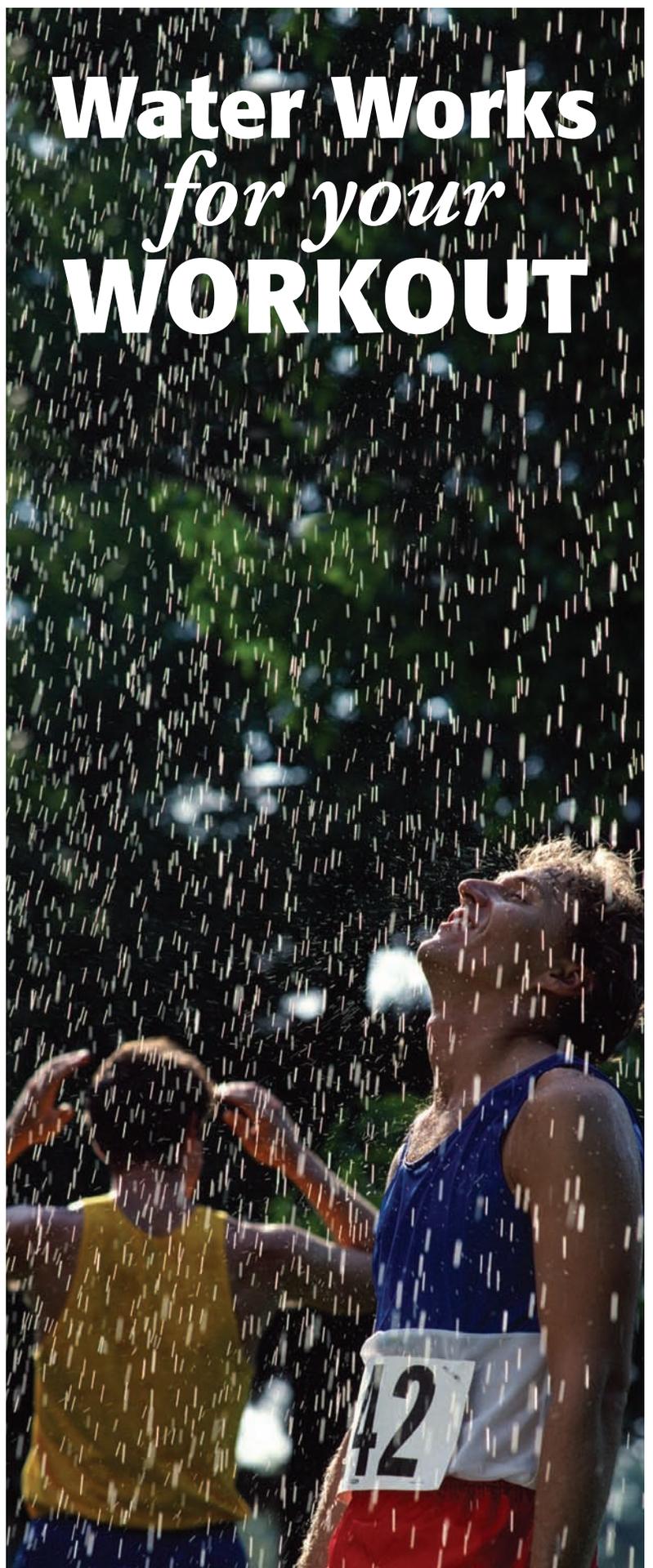
A good way to tell if you have given your body enough fluids is to look at the color of your urine. If your urine is a pale yellow color, you have done a good job. If your urine looks very dark, it means that it is very concentrated, and your body is trying to keep in all the fluids it needs. This means you need to drink more, and try to increase the fluids you are taking in next time. 



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# Water Works *for your* WORKOUT