

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776
e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu**The Color to Rehydrate Right**

If you're off for an hour's bike ride, what goes in your fanny pack? What do you reach for after a nice long run? Or if strength training and weight lifting are your cup of tea, what do you keep beside the bench? If you're like most Americans, it's probably a bottle of brightly colored sports drink, or maybe a clear container of vitamin water. But for best results, the color of that beverage should be white or brown! Yes, the best liquid for rehydration, as well a lot of other health benefits, is *milk*, plain or chocolate!

Milk is better than sports drinks? Look at the nutrients! Sports drinks add sugar to encourage the body to absorb water. Milk has milk sugar, which does the same thing even better. Sports drinks and vitamin waters have some minerals or vitamins added. Milk has 9 essential nutrients, including calcium, potassium and magnesium, three of the most essential minerals. Plus vitamin D is there to be sure calcium is absorbed as well as possible. Milk is 90% water so there's plenty of fluid to be absorbed with all these minerals and replace what we lost with our sweating.

The big difference between milk and these artificial beverages is that milk is a great source of a very high quality protein. Endurance athletes – the long-distance runners, bikers or swimmers – who drink milk before or during their exercise lose less muscle protein. Saving your muscles is not a bad idea for anyone, athlete or not.

Adults who work on resistance training get better muscle development and increased strength when they drink milk instead of enhanced water after a workout. It seems that the combination of an easily absorbable carbohydrate such as milk sugar

plus the high quality protein of milk casein and whey are the winning combination. Milk is very effective either before training or to recover when you push your limits.

If you really can't stomach plain, low fat, white milk, go for chocolate. It's actually even better for keeping you hydrated. The little bit of added sugar gets the water into your system faster. The fat in whole milk slows down how fast milk is digested and absorbed. So for athletics and rehydration, stick to the low fat or fat free milk.

For those of us who exercise for weight management rather than muscles, milk is still the beverage of choice. The calcium and vitamin D in milk influence our hormones. These encourage our bodies to break down more fat for energy and to store less fat around our middles. Milk drinkers lose weight more easily and keep it off longer than dieters who don't drink milk. While we get 80 more calories in a glass of skim milk our bodies will naturally adjust our intake during the rest of the day. We usually end up eating fewer calories in the whole day because milk seems to keep us from feeling so hungry. There may be other nutrients in milk that affect weight loss too, because calcium plus vitamin D tablets don't have the same effect.

If you're ready to head out for some healthy exercise and want a healthier energy bar than the packages from the store, try these. While you need to toast a few ingredients they don't need to be baked. The fiber and whole-grain carbohydrates will provide long-lasting energy, and the milk and nuts add protein to repair your muscles. They'll keep for 2 weeks in the refrigerator if you keep them wrapped or covered. Enjoy!

Sesame-Almond Energy Bars

1 cup quick or old-fashioned rolled oats

¼ cup sesame seeds

¼ cup whole flaxseeds

½ cup nonfat dry milk powder

1 cup whole-grain puffed rice or wheat cereal

1 cup raisins or dried cranberries

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almonds or peanuts, coarsely chopped

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup almond or peanut butter

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup honey

1 tsp vanilla extract

Line a 9x9 inch baking pan with foil, leaving an extra 1 inch hang out on the ends.

Spray foil with cooking spray. Set aside. Toast oats in a medium skillet (not non-stick) over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until they turn golden brown and smell toasty.

Transfer to large bowl. Add sesame seeds to skillet and toast, stirring constantly, until light golden brown. Add to oats in bowl. Toast flaxseeds about 1 minute, until they smell toasty and start to pop. Allow to cool. When cool, grind in blender or clean coffee grinder. Add to oats. Add cereal, raisins, chopped almonds and milk powder to bowl.

Mix well. Combine almond or peanut butter and honey in small pan or microwave safe dish. Heat and stir until blended together and smooth. Stir in vanilla. Pour over oat mixture and stir until dry ingredients start to stick together. Put in prepared baking pan.

Use a piece of plastic wrap on your hand to press the mixture down until it's tightly and evenly packed into the pan. Cover and refrigerate until stiff, at least one hour. Use foil to lift out of pan. Cut into 24 pieces. Each piece has about 160 calories, 3 g of fiber and 5 g of protein. Adapted from Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter.