Hydration Guide for Young Players

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

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FUEL | HYDRATE | RECOVER

1 WHY HYDRATION MATTERS

Even mild dehydration can affect how a young player feels and performs. The aim is not to force fixed volumes on every child, but to create regular, easy opportunities to drink before, during and after football.

GOOD EVERYDAY HABITS

- Make water easily available throughout the day, not only at training.
- Bring a labelled bottle to every session and match.
- Drink with meals and snacks.
- Increase attention to fluids in hot weather, indoor facilities, long sessions and tournaments.

SIGNS A PLAYER MAY NEED MORE FLUID

- Thirst, dry mouth or headache.
- Unusual tiredness, irritability or difficulty concentrating.
- Dizziness, cramps or feeling excessively hot.
- Urine becoming noticeably darker or less frequent than usual.

2 BEFORE, DURING & AFTER

- **Before:** arrive having drunk normally across the day. A small drink in the period before activity is sensible.
- **During:** offer frequent drink breaks. Younger players may need reminders because they can become absorbed in play.
- **After:** continue drinking and pair fluids with the normal post-training meal or snack.

3 WATER OR SPORTS DRINK?

- **Water:** the preferred drink for most children and most sessions lasting around an hour or less.
- **Sports/electrolyte drink:** may be useful during prolonged vigorous exercise, repeated matches, very hot conditions or heavy sweating. It should not replace water as the everyday drink.
- **Energy drinks:** are not appropriate hydration products for children or adolescents and should not be used for youth sport.

COACHING HABIT: schedule drink breaks - do not wait until players ask.

4 HOT WEATHER & SAFETY

- Provide more frequent breaks and access to shade or a cooler area.
- Modify intensity or duration when heat and humidity are high.
- A player who is confused, collapses, becomes unresponsive, has severe symptoms or appears dangerously overheated needs urgent medical attention.

5 PRACTICAL CLUB STANDARD

- Every player brings their own labelled bottle.
- Coaches build drink breaks into session plans.
- Extra water is available where possible.
- Staff know the signs of dehydration and heat illness.
- Parents are reminded that hydration begins before arrival at the field.

This resource provides general nutrition and hydration guidance for young players and is not individual medical or dietetic advice. Needs vary with age, growth, health, allergies, activity level and conditions. Parents and clubs should seek advice from a qualified healthcare professional or registered dietitian where appropriate.