

What Your Pee Is Telling You: The Athlete's Hydration Self-Check

An engaging, teen-friendly guide to using urine color, weight changes, and simple self-checks to monitor hydration status, understand electrolytes, and prevent dehydration during training and competition.

ACCESS

Free resource

AUDIENCE

athlete / parent

READ TIME

6 min

AUDIENCE

Athlete + Parent

WHY THIS MATTERS

Yes, we're going there.



What Your Pee Is Telling You: The Athlete's Hydration Self-Check

QUICK START

Start here

An engaging, teen-friendly guide to using urine color, weight changes, and simple self-checks to monitor hydration status, understand electrolytes, and...



COLOR READ

Pale yellow is the goal

- Nearly clear can mean over-drinking.
- Apple-juice yellow means start replacing fluids soon.



BEST TIMING

Check the first pee and the post-session trend

- Morning urine shows how the last day went.
- Post-practice urine shows whether the session beat the plan.



ADD CONTEXT

Match color with thirst, body weight, and feel

- Dark urine plus unusual thirst usually means you are behind.
- A 1-2% body-weight drop confirms meaningful fluid loss.

Morning Pee vs. Post-Practice Pee: Which Matters More?

Both matter, but they tell you different things.

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Morning urine is your hydration baseline. Dark morning urine means you went to bed dehydrated — either you didn't drink enough the day before, or practice depleted you more than you replaced.

If your morning urine is consistently dark yellow or darker, you have a chronic hydration problem affecting your recovery overnight.

FIELD USE

A field protocol coaches can actually repeat



MORNING

Check the athlete before practice starts

Dark urine, headache, and an empty bottle are red flags before the session even begins.



DURING TRAINING

Use planned drinking moments

Scheduled drink breaks beat thirst when the day is hot, dry, or altitude-adjusted.

AFTER PRACTICE

Replace losses steadily

Push recovery fluids across the next few hours instead of one rushed bottle.

When Water Isn't Enough: The Electrolyte Decision Tree

Plain water is fine for:

Practices under 60 minutes

Low-intensity activity

Situations where you're well-fed and not sweating heavily

Practice or competition lasts more than 60 to 75 minutes

You're sweating heavily (salty residue on skin/hair after practice)

Printable Hydration Self-Assessment Card

DAILY MORNING CHECK Morning urine: pale yellow?

PRE-PRACTICE

16–20 oz in the 60 minutes before

DURING (60+ MIN PRACTICE)

6–8 oz every 15–20 minutes

POST-PRACTICE

16–24 oz for every pound lost

LONG MEET DAYS

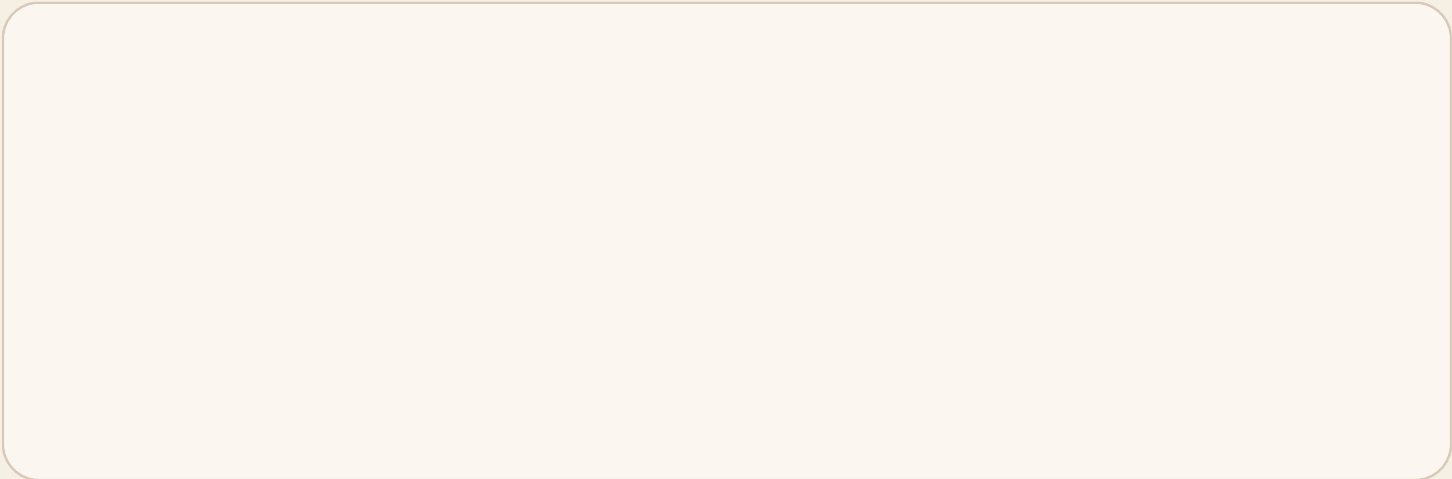
Drink consistently throughout

AT ALTITUDE

Add 0.5L/day above your normal target

The Urine Color Chart (The Whole Truth)

Colorless / nearly clear: You might be slightly over-hydrated.



COLORLESS / NEARLY CLEAR

You might be slightly over-hydrated. Drinking so much water that your urine has no color at all can dilute your...

PALE YELLOW (LIKE LEMONADE)

This is the target. Well-hydrated. You're in good shape.

YELLOW (LIKE APPLE JUICE)

Acceptable but on the lower end. Drink a bit more in the next hour.

DARK YELLOW (LIKE APPLE CIDER)

You're getting dehydrated. Performance starts to decline. Drink.

AMBER OR BROWN

You're meaningfully dehydrated. Performance drops of 5 to 10% or more. Headache, cramping, and fatigue are either...

RED OR PINK

Call a doctor if this isn't explainable by beets or other red-pigment foods.

Electrolytes Explained Simply

Water gets you halfway there.

Water gets you halfway there. Electrolytes get you the rest of the way.

Sodium — the most important for athletes. Controls how much fluid your blood holds. When you sweat, you lose sodium. Replacing fluid without sodium dilutes your blood — a condition called hyponatremia. Sodium also drives thirst.

Potassium — works alongside sodium for fluid balance inside cells. Found in bananas, potatoes, orange juice. Contributes to muscle cramping when combined with sodium losses.

QUICK REFERENCE

Key targets to keep in view

Use these as planning anchors when you turn the manual into weekly actions.

TARGET COLOR

Pale straw

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

QUICK CHECK

AM + post-practice

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

ESCALATE

Dark + symptoms

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

COACH TAKEAWAYS

Use this with athletes

These are the cues worth repeating before the week gets busy.

Before school: Aim for pale yellow, not clear.

After practice: Replace losses with fluid plus sodium.

Coach cue: Make hydration a check-in, not a lecture.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Use it this week

What color plus symptom combo tells your athlete to act today?

BOTTOM LINE

Urine color is a screen, not the whole hydration plan.

RELATED TOOL

Hydration calculator

Set a repeatable fluid target.

Source topics: [hydration for athletes](#) • [urine color hydration](#) • [sweat rate test](#) • [athlete hydration check](#) • [electrolytes explained](#) • [sports drink guide](#)