



# ← MAKE ORAL HEALTH PART OF YOUR GAME PLAN ←

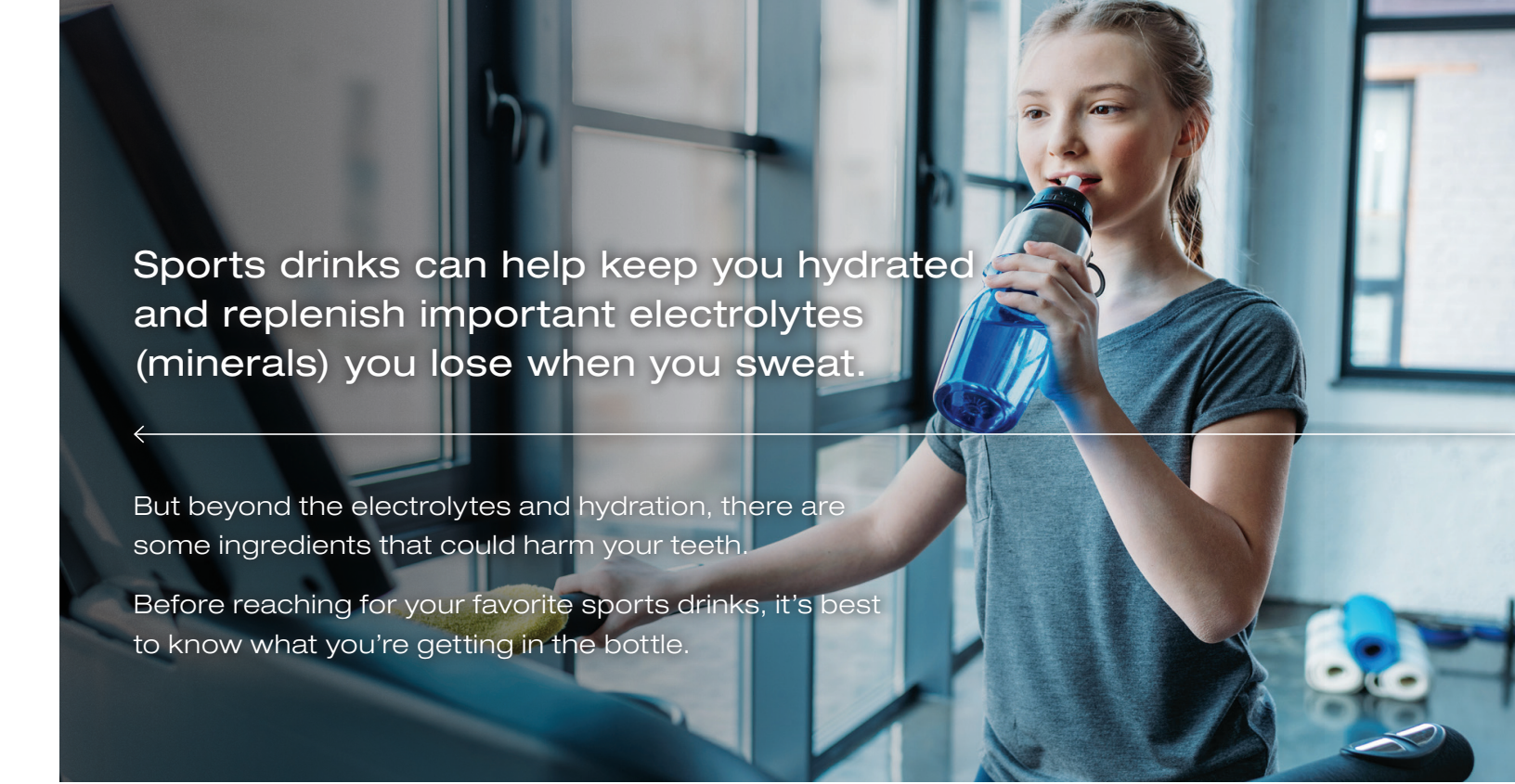
## ← ARE SPORTS DRINKS BAD FOR YOUR TEETH? ←

You may see athletes in advertisements with sports drinks on the sidelines or taking a swig before a big game. But what's really in those bottles, and are they good for your oral health?

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Sports drinks can help keep you hydrated and replenish important electrolytes (minerals) you lose when you sweat.

← But beyond the electrolytes and hydration, there are some ingredients that could harm your teeth.

Before reaching for your favorite sports drinks, it's best to know what you're getting in the bottle.

## THE PROS AND CONS OF SPORTS DRINKS AND HOW THEY AFFECT YOUR ORAL HEALTH.

### ✓ PROS

Sports drinks can be useful during non-stop intense exercise lasting more than 1 hour. If exercising very hard or for a long time (endurance sports) or exercising in hot and humid conditions or while wearing protective sports equipment, sports drinks can:

- Keep you hydrated.
- Supply carbohydrates for energy.
- Replenish important electrolytes (minerals) you lose when you sweat. Electrolytes help the muscles and nerves in your body stay balanced and work optimally. Too few electrolytes in your body can lead to dehydration, nerve spasms, and cramps.

Sports drinks often contain the 7 most common types of electrolytes that are vital to the body:

- Sodium
- Potassium
- Calcium
- Bicarbonate
- Chloride
- Magnesium
- Phosphate

While replenishing these electrolytes can be helpful, the sugar and acidity of your sports drink aren't great for your oral health.

### ✗ CONS

- Sports drinks contain high levels of sugar which can lead to cavities.
- Sports drinks are acidic, so they can erode your tooth enamel.
- The sugar in sports drinks adds calories while you may be trying to burn them off.
- The added electrolytes (e.g., sodium) are not needed if you are not sweating very hard or for a long time.





## Sports drinks and your oral health

The sugar in sports drinks makes your teeth more vulnerable to bacteria, which feeds off the excess sugar. Bacteria can then cause tooth decay. Untreated tooth decay can lead to cavities and gum disease.

The acidity of sports drinks can soften your tooth enamel and dentin. This makes your

teeth more susceptible to stains from the bright coloured dye in sports drinks and other staining drinks like wine and tea. When your tooth enamel becomes thin and fragile, your teeth can also become sensitive to hot or cold temperatures.

### Protecting your teeth from sports drinks

- Only use sports drinks during intense activity lasting more than one hour.
- Do not swish or hold sports drinks in the mouth. The less time the drink is in contact with your teeth, the better.
- Take out your mouth guard before having a sports drink.
- Rinse your mouth with water after having a sports drink.
- Eat cheese or chew sugar free gum after having a sports drink; this can increase saliva flow, which helps protect your teeth.
- Wait 30 minutes before brushing your teeth – abrasion from brushing when the enamel is softened from an acidic drink can make it worse; wait 30 minutes to give enamel time to harden again.



### Tooth-friendly options

Drink water for hydration before, during, and after your workout. Water supports your muscles, nerves, and every other system in your body. Plus, water is great for your oral health too.

Replenish by eating a nutritious snack or meal after activity. Include good sources of:

- Carbohydrates for energy (e.g., grain products, fruit)
- Protein for muscle recovery (e.g., nuts, seeds, beans, dairy products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish)
- Electrolytes (e.g., vegetables and fruit, grains and protein foods)

## EROSION AND SPORTS DRINKS: TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK?



The acidity of sports drinks and many other beverages (e.g., carbonated soft drinks, fruit juices) contributes to dental erosion. Dental erosion is progressive, irreversible loss of dental hard tissues by a chemical process without bacterial involvement. Acidic drinks can cause the tooth surface to soften, particularly with frequent consumption and a reduced saliva flow.



## Replace sugary drinks with water.

### Sugary drinks include:

- Iced tea
- Fruit juice
- Soft drinks
- Sports drinks
- Caffeinated energy drinks
- Chocolate milk
- Specialty coffee and teas
- Fruit-flavoured drinks and punches
- Sweetened plant-based beverages
- Flavoured waters with added sugars



## Make water your drink of choice:

- Drinking water is important for your health.
- Drinking water is a great way to keep hydrated.
- Fluoridated drinking water protects your teeth against cavities.



## Teens are some of the highest consumers of sugary drinks:

Drinking sugary drinks may lead to increased risk of cavities, obesity, and type 2 diabetes in children.

Sugary drinks are a major source of sugars in the diets of pre-teens and teens.

## VISIT YOUR DENTIST REGULARLY

Most people are not aware of their tooth surface loss when it starts. Get your teeth checked regularly. Ask your dentist for advice on how to keep your teeth healthy.

This article contains some information originally published in [GuardianDirect.com](http://GuardianDirect.com).

For more information,  
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