

There are a range of drink options marketed to improve sports performance. Some popular options include sports drinks, caffeine-based drinks, protein-based drinks and also water. So, which of these drinks are necessary when exercising and what purpose do they provide?

Drink	Purpose	Who is this necessary for?
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hydration - Assists in a range of body functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone! - Water should be the drink of choice for all.
Sports drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hydration - Provision of carbohydrates and/or electrolytes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational exercisers and the general population do not require sports drinks, as hydration needs can be met using water and carbohydrate needs can be met through food. - Sports drinks may be useful for those that need to ingest both carbohydrates and fluids/electrolytes at the same time. - Sports drinks are generally designed for use during exercise lasting greater than 90 minutes.
Caffeine-based drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When taken before or during exercise, caffeine can reduce perception of effort and/or fatigue - Can have potential side effects – e.g. increased heart rate, gastrointestinal upset, sleep disturbances etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caffeine can be used to benefit performance through the reduction of effort and/or fatigue. - However, recreational exercisers and the general population do not generally require caffeine-based drinks.
Protein-based drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hydration - Provision of protein 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational exercisers and the general population do not require protein-based drinks or protein powders, as hydration needs can be met using water and protein needs can be met through food. - However, protein-based drinks can be a convenient option for someone that struggles to get in protein-rich food post-exercise or has high energy requirements.

For personalised and tailored sports nutrition advice, [find an Accredited Sports Dietitian](#) near you.