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Got Water? The Most Effective Performance Enhancer You're Not Using  
Featuring: Verve 4

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Many athletes swear by their gels, powders, bars and chews, but there's one key ingredient that may be lacking in your personal arsenal of training tricks: Water. That's right – plain old H<sub>2</sub>O is the original performance enhancer because without adequate fluids your body can't efficiently convert food into energy. Dehydration also increases core temperature, decreases VO<sub>2</sub>max, and increases heart rate and perceived exertion, all of which can accelerate the onset of fatigue.

We all know by now that thirst is not necessarily a good indicator of hydration; by the time your body senses it, you've already lost about one percent of your body weight in water. But did you also know that exercise performance can decrease with a little as a two percent drop in body weight from dehydration? That's less than three pounds in a 150-pound athlete – a mighty small window in which you have to respond to thirst before bodily functions are affected. Why is this important to note? Well, some athletes can lose up to five pounds of sweat (or more!) during practice and competition. So to combat the water lost in sweat during these sessions, plan to compensate by drinking before feeling thirsty and making every effort to start exercise sessions in a hydrated state.

If you: Need some serious hydration, where a bottle just won't cut it

Then try: The Cadillac of hydration packs, the Osprey Verve 4 (\$64.00) is a ridiculously-comfortable way to tote two liters of water without feeling like a pack mule. Created specifically with a woman's body in mind, the Verve series not only utilizes mesh panels for breathability and an adjustable harness for comfort, but it also offers quick access to water at all times, thanks to a smartly-designed built-in magnet system in the bite valve and sternum strap.

