

Don't Sweat It: You're Covered

from **Celebrating Chemistry**



Think about when you sweat. After running around at recess? Playing sports? Just standing in the sun on a hot summer day? In each of these cases, your body is trying to get cooler.

When you are hot, you sweat. Your body makes sweat inside tiny coiled tubes buried in your skin, called sweat glands. The average person has over 2 million of them! Sweat is released onto the surface of your skin through small openings called pores. It may not feel like it when you're sweating a lot, but the water in your sweat is always drying on your skin. As it dries, it carries away some of the extra heat from your body. This process is known as evaporation.



What are Electrolytes

Besides water, you release minerals called electrolytes. Your body needs electrolytes so your nerves can talk to each other, your muscles can contract and move as they're supposed to, and you maintain the right balance of water in your cells. The most abundant electrolytes found in your body are sodium, potassium, and chloride. When you sweat, these

electrolytes come together to form salts that give sweat a salty taste.

Keeping the right amounts of water and electrolytes in your body is important. Without enough of either, your muscles can become weak or can cramp up. You may also get a headache or feel dizzy.

Water is Best

For exercise or play that lasts 30 minutes or less, drinking plenty of water is best. Our bodies usually get enough electrolytes from what we eat and drink during the day. For example, bananas and potatoes are full of potassium. Do you have any ideas of foods you may eat that contain electrolytes? You can check nutritional labels on food packages or ask a family member or teacher.

Athletes who are very active for long periods of time can lose a lot of electrolytes as they sweat. In that case, they need to replace these electrolytes. That's why you may see athletes gulp sports drinks as well as water as they play.

Remember, to do your best at sports, stay hydrated with plenty of water. Luckily, you do not have worry about staying cool; your body has it covered—with sweat!

