

Water is best choice for rehydrating children and teens
Lauren Healey, 4-H Youth Development Agent

While the start of school is right around the corner there appears to be no end in sight for summer. Temperatures still climb into the 90's every day, with heat indexes creeping into the 100's. With the thermostat in the red, it becomes increasingly important to make sure that children are staying properly hydrated – especially those that play sports. Instead of grabbing a sport or energy drink to give thirsty children the extra pep and fluid they need, stick to water instead.

An article written by Sharon Dowdy, a news editor with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, describes why water is the better alternative.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is coming out against the routine use of sports drinks and is encouraging a complete ban on energy drinks for children and teenagers, said Connie Crawley, a nutrition specialist with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

"Sports drinks are beverages designed to quickly replenish fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes like sodium and potassium after vigorous and prolonged exercise," she said. However, if children are eating regular, well-balanced meals throughout the day there is little need for these added nutrients.

A sports drink may be helpful following an intense workout, Crawley said, but it should not be a routine beverage served with a meal.

Energy drinks are another popular thirst quencher and are the fastest growing U.S. beverage market; 2011 sales are expected to top \$9 billion. The stimulants in energy drinks can cause sleeplessness, increased heart rate, high blood pressure, fluid loss, anxiety and heart arrhythmias. "Children and teens can also become dependent on these substances and may have withdrawal symptoms when they cut down [their intake]," she said.

Withdrawal symptoms include headache, fatigue, poor concentration, drowsiness, decreased alertness, flu-like symptoms, withdrawal from friends and social interaction, irritability, depressed mood, muscle pain, stiffness and even nausea and vomiting.

"The stimulant guarana is a real concern since just one gram of guarana equals 40 milligrams of caffeine," she said. "Often, parents have no idea how much stimulant their child is getting since many energy drinks do not list the total amount on the label."

"Water is the best fluid for rehydration and low-fat or non-fat milk is sufficient to meet amino acid and protein needs," she said.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.