



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Sports Drinks with Electrolytes and low sugar and low caffeine

A good sports drink for adolescents should:

- Rehydrate effectively (contain sodium and potassium)
- Replenish electrolytes lost in sweat
- Be low in added sugar
- Be free from caffeine and stimulants

Recommended Options

Here are some **evidence-based and paediatrician-friendly options** available in the UK or easily replicable at home:

1. O.R.S Hydration Tablets (or Dioralyte Sport)

- **Electrolytes:** Sodium, potassium, chloride, magnesium
- **Sugar:** Very low – contains glucose for sodium absorption but far less than typical sports drinks
- **Caffeine:** None
- **Notes:** Originally designed for rehydration in illness, but now used for sports hydration too
- **Flavours:** Mild; easy to dilute further

 **Good for:** Adolescents during prolonged activity or hot weather

2. Homemade Electrolyte Drink

You can make a simple and cost-effective sports drink at home:

- 500 ml water



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- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp lemon or orange juice
- 1–2 tsp honey (optional)

🟢 Optional: Add a small splash of natural fruit juice or coconut water for taste

✅ **Good for:** Customising sugar level and flavour; avoids additives

3. Coconut Water (Natural, Unsweetened)

- **Electrolytes:** High in potassium, some sodium and magnesium
- **Sugar:** Naturally occurring ($\approx$ 4–5g/100 ml)
- **Caffeine:** None

⚠️ **Watch for:** Flavoured/sweetened versions which can be high in added sugars

✅ **Good for:** Light to moderate hydration needs; natural alternative

4. SOS Hydration or Nuun Sport (Low-Sugar Tablets)

- Designed for athletes
- **Sugar:** <1g per serving (uses stevia or natural sweeteners)
- **Electrolytes:** Well-balanced
- **Caffeine:** Available in both caffeinated and caffeine-free versions – choose **caffeine-free** for adolescents

✅ **Good for:** Adolescents in organised sports or training >1 hour

❌ Drinks to Avoid

- **Lucozade Sport / Gatorade / Powerade:** High in sugar (up to 6–8g/100 ml) and additives
- **Energy drinks** (e.g. Monster, Red Bull): High caffeine, unsuitable for under-18s
- **Isotonic sports drinks** marketed to adults: Often excessive sugar for adolescent needs



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Summary Table

Drink	Electrolytes	Sugar	Caffeine	Comments
O.R.S / Dioralyte Sport	Excellent	Low	No	Rehydration-focused
Homemade electrolyte mix	Customisable	Optional	No	Cheap, safe, no additives
Coconut water (natural)	Moderate	Moderate	No	Natural, palatable
Nuun / SOS tablets	Balanced	Very low	Caffeine-free options	Widely used by athletes

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