



To drip or not to drip?

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"Steer clear of IV bar cocktails. The potential benefits are not worth the potential risks. Instead of expensive IV cocktails, focus on an overall healthy diet with adequate calories, protein, carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables and plenty of water. If you're worried that your child may not be consuming enough nutrients, a daily multivitamin can be a helpful addition. If it were my child athlete, would I even consider getting an IV cocktail? Absolutely not."

- Caryn Pyle, D.O.
Cook Children's Pediatrician

The risks and benefits of intravenous fluid (IV) cocktails

Top performance is the goal for most young athletes. Some may look for supplements to give them an edge and help them perform at their best. A treatment that is gaining a lot of attention is the intravenous (IV) fluid cocktail.

In many cases, IV service providers (such as boutique wellness centers, concierge, pop-up clinics, etc.) will offer treatments to children as young as 12. They claim that their vitamin cocktails can rehydrate and detoxify the body, improve athletic performance, boost energy, relax the mind, provide immune support as well as decrease recovery time, fatigue and anxiety.

Is it too good to be true? Let's look at the facts.

Rehydration

Simply drinking water will hydrate the body. In general, water (with the occasional electrolyte drink during periods of long intense activity) keeps the body hydrated without the need for an IV infusion.

Athletic performance

Many infusion bars offer ingredients marketed to improve athletic performance including vitamin C, glutathione, B vitamin complex, vitamin B12 and various amino acids.

Vitamin C and **glutathione** are important antioxidants for your body, but may not be necessary in IV form. When your body is under stress (like intense exercise), it creates particles that cause damage to your cells. In turn, your body uses antioxidants to destroy some of these particles and minimize the damage they can cause. You can find vitamin C in citrus fruits, strawberries, kiwi, bell peppers, broccoli and potatoes. Glutathione is in foods such as watermelon, avocados, broccoli and spinach.

B vitamins play a role in energy production and are in foods like fortified cereal, enriched grains, meat, beans, dairy, eggs and some fruits and vegetables. Vitamin B12 is only in animal products. While B vitamins are essential for energy production, there is not enough evidence to suggest that increasing your B vitamin intake over the recommended dietary allowance can increase energy levels.

Amino acids are the building blocks of protein and crucial nutrients for overall health and body function. They make sure your body can complete the chemical reactions necessary for life and keep your immune system functioning properly. Amino acids form your hair, skin, nails, bones and her body structures, as well as help build and maintain skeletal muscle. Luckily, amino acids are in all protein foods including meat, poultry, fish, beans, legumes, dairy, tofu, tempeh and more! If your child is getting enough protein from food, they do not need amino acid supplementation in IV form.

Potential risks of infusions

- Too much fluid, vitamin, or mineral intake
- Possible infection
- Addictive habits with performance-enhancing substances

To sum up, the nutrients found in many IV cocktails are already present in a balanced diet, and there is currently no reliable research to suggest that commercial IV treatments are beneficial in any population. There are many risks, particularly when your child's primary doctor isn't involved.



Case study

An adult patient went to a medical spa in Wortham, Texas, and received an IV cocktail that contained vitamin B complex, ascorbic acid, vitamin B12 and electrolytes, including potassium chloride. Shortly after receiving this IV cocktail, the patient became unresponsive, and then within a few hours died as a complication of the treatment. The patient did not receive an appropriate medical evaluation beforehand, which could have potentially saved their life.

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To discuss individualized nutrition recommendations for your athlete, ask your pediatrician for a referral to Cook Children's Sports Medicine.

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