



Fueling Wrestlers

Fueling Your Sport

- The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that the body composition of every wrestler be assessed before the season. Boys younger than 16 years with less than 7% body fat, and male wrestlers older than 16 years with less than 5% body fat need medical clearance before they are allowed to wrestle. No body fat standards for female wrestlers have been developed.
- High school and college wrestlers need to eat at least 1,700 to 2,500 calories per day.
- During very hard training, wrestlers may need an additional 1,000 calories per day.
- Wrestlers need 2.3 to 3.6 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (5 to 8 g/kg/day). Good sources of carbohydrates include whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables.
- Wrestlers typically need 0.55 to 0.8 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day (1.2 to 1.7 g/kg/day). If calorie intake is restricted for quick weight loss, protein needs may increase to 0.9 grams per pound per day (2.0 g/kg/day). Good sources of protein include fish, chicken, turkey, beef, low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, nuts, and soy foods (tofu, soy nuts, and soy burgers).
- Wrestlers need at least 0.45 grams of fat per pound of body weight per day (1 g/kg/day). Choose heart-healthy fats, such as canola oil, olive oil, and nuts.

Fluid Needs

- Wrestlers often try to “make weight” by dehydrating themselves. This is very dangerous. In 1997, three college wrestlers died from the effects of dehydration when they tried to “make weight.”
- Dangerous weight-loss practices include riding an exercise bike in a rubber suit in a steam room, using diuretics and laxatives, drinking nothing or very little, and

even spitting. These dehydration practices strain your heart and lungs and can cause severe health problems.

- Dehydration also decreases strength and performance.
- Some wrestlers believe they can lose weight for the weigh-in through dehydration and then rehydrate before the match. That is a false belief. It takes up to 6 hours for your body to reach normal hydration.
- Drink 2 cups of fluids 2 hours before a match.
- Drink another cup of fluid 15 minutes before exercise.
- When possible, drink ½ cup of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes during practice.
- After practice or a match, weigh yourself and drink about 3 cups of fluids for every pound you lost through sweat while you were active.
- Choose sport drinks to replace electrolytes lost in sweat.
- Eat foods with a lot of water in them (such as grapes, watermelon, apples, celery, peaches, lettuce, and cucumbers).

Supplements Commonly Used by Wrestlers

- Creatine may help athletes in sports with short bursts of activity, such as wrestling.
- Creatine may also help your muscles to recover, which could help you to train harder.
- Creatine monohydrate powder is a common type of creatine supplement. It can be taken at a dose of 3 to 5 grams per day. Taking more than that amount does not increase the benefits.
- For creatine supplementation to work, you must drink adequate fluids.
- Weight gain is common with creatine supplementation. For this reason, wrestlers may choose to avoid this supplement.
- Creatine is not recommended for athletes younger than 18 years because it is not known whether it is safe for people in that age group.

Top Three Nutrition Tips for Improving Performance

- 1. Ask a sports dietitian for advice about body composition and safe weight-loss practices.** Some coaches do not have nutrition training, and they may have unrealistic expectations about weight loss.
- 2. Stay close to your competition weight in the off-season.** If you keep your weight down in the off-season, you won't be tempted to use dangerous weight-cutting practices during the competitive season. To lose weight safely, you must lose it gradually. Cutting weight quickly leads to dehydration and poor performance, and it can be very dangerous to your health.
- 3. Have some carbohydrates before competition.** For your precompetition meal, choose carbohydrate foods and eat only a little protein and fat. Liquid supplements (for example, Boost or Ensure) are good choices for some wrestlers. These portable drinks are low in fiber and easy to digest. They can be consumed right after weigh-in, and they provide fluids as well as calories.

Nutrition Prescription:

- _____ calories per day
- _____ grams of carbohydrate per day
- _____ grams of protein per day
- _____ grams of fat per day
- _____ cups of fluid per day

Special concerns: