

# Nutrition for Wrestlers



Training hard is only half the battle. Just as you must take a systematic approach towards your training, you must be equally as thoughtful about what you eat and drink. Wrestlers are taking their diets more serious than ever, and it's not a coincidence to find that the best competitors also have a solid diet plan. Simply put: If you want to be competitive, you must get with the program... the dietary program, that is.

The following guide details all the basics you need to know about what to eat, and some of what not to eat.

## FUN FACT

Wrestlers burn an average of 1,200 calories during every two-hour training session. Keeping this in mind, you should shoot to consume roughly 1,500-3,000 calories on any given day. The heavier your body weight is the more calories you need to consume on a daily basis. Also, the harder you train, the more you need to eat in order to maintain energy and built muscle. Everyone's calorie intake needs will vary, so you need to find the amount that works for you.

## Facts About Proteins

Proteins are a very important nutrient for wrestlers, as they aid recovery and encourage the growth of muscle and body tissue. When you work out, your muscle fibers break down. Consuming a healthy amount of protein will help to repair your muscles and grow them stronger. This is why proteins should compose roughly 25-30 percent of your daily intake.

Also, it takes more time to burn proteins than carbohydrates, so consuming them will help you maintain energy throughout the day. You should be eating at least a little bit of protein with most of your meals. Heavier proteins such as meat and dairy may take your body longer to break down, so try to consume these in the morning or immediately following a workout to ensure your body is processing them efficiently.

## Good sources of protein:

- Lean poultry (chicken and turkey breast)
- Low-fat dairy (milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, etc.)
- Fish

- Lean beef (Steak: top sirloin, top round, etc.)
- Shellfish
- Legumes (soybeans, peas, beans, etc.)
- Eggs

### Hot Tip: One Supplement

The only "supplement" you really need is a multivitamin. Nutritional supplements such as creatine and whey protein have become common among today's athletes. Although such products aren't the worst thing you can consume, the reality is they aren't necessary if you have the correct diet. You should be aiming to get all of the necessary nutrients you need through the food you eat. A daily multivitamin will reinforce your healthy diet, helping you to "fill in the gaps."

### Facts About Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are by far the most significant nutrient for wrestlers. Carbohydrates have a major influence on your energy level, in both the short and long term. This is why carbs should be eaten with every meal. They should compose roughly 50-60 percent of your total daily intake. Also, most carbohydrates are typically high in fiber, which helps to regulate your digestion and metabolism.

Carbohydrates are your fuel, and without the right amount you will not be able to work out or compete at optimum performance. The key point here is to understand how carbohydrates work so you can better balance them into your diet.

### Simple vs. Complex Carbs

Simple carbohydrates are also known as "simple sugars." These contain sugar in its simplest form, and are broken down and absorbed by the body more quickly than complex carbohydrates.

Simple carbohydrates are most beneficial when consumed right before or immediately following a workout or competition. Fueling up on simple carbs (such as sweet fruits or veggies) right before you exercise will give you a boost of energy. Consuming them immediately following exercise will help your body recover faster and stabilize your energy level.

Simple carbohydrates have a dark side, though. Sure, fruits and vegetables are healthy sources of simple carbs. But ***table sugar, artificial sweeteners, soda, candy, and other sweet treats contain huge amounts of simple carbohydrates. These foods have more sugar than you need, and thus makes it easy to overload yourself. This can lead to fat production.***

Fruits and vegetables will fulfill your simple carbohydrate needs. The following lists contain foods you should absolutely be eating.

### **Simple Carbs (Vegetables)**

- Leafy greens (lettuce, spinach, cabbage, etc.)
- Cruciferous vegetables (kale, broccoli, cauliflower, etc.)
- Onions
- Peppers (bell peppers especially)

### **Simple Carbs (Fruits)**

- Apples
- Avocados
- Tomatoes
- Bananas
- Citrus
- Berries

Complex carbohydrates, also known as starches, are the best long-term source of energy for a wrestler. Complex carbohydrates don't burn as quickly as simple carbohydrates do, and will help to maintain your energy level through longer workouts. This is why complex carbs are most beneficial if consumed earlier in the day. Experiment with the quantity and frequency of which you eat them, with your goal being to reach a healthy and consistent energy level.

- Whole wheat bread and pasta
- Wheat free bread
- Rice
- Tortillas
- Beans
- Quinoa
- Cereal grains (oats, bran, rye, etc.)
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes

### Facts About Fats

Fats are probably the most misunderstood source of energy by the general public. Many people think of fats as a something unnecessary that should be cut out of a wrestler's diet completely. This is false! Sure, in high amounts, fat can be very harmful. However, fat is essentially a concentrated form of energy that is imperative to maintaining your health and energy levels. This is why fats should compose roughly 20-25 percent of your total daily intake. Also, try to consume them in the morning to help stabilize your energy level throughout the day.

There are a few basic rules you want to follow when choosing food items to fulfill your daily fat needs. Stay away from saturated fats, trans fats, and hydrogenated fats. These types of fats typically aren't the healthiest, but are okay in moderation. Eat foods that contain monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats most often.

### Good sources of fat:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Fish and fish oil
- Peanut butter
- Olives and extra virgin olive oil
- Avocados

### Hydration

Properly hydrating yourself is critical to your performance in wrestling, but more importantly, is absolutely necessary to stay healthy and feel good. Without water your body functions far less effectively, hindering your metabolism (how your body breaks down food and distributes energy) and temperature regulation.

Wrestlers should aim to drink at least 80 ounces of water a day, or about 16-20 ounces for every pound lost. The more you sweat, the more water you should drink. The best way to gauge your level of hydration is by the color of your urine. Darker, or "cloudy," urine typically suggests you don't have enough water in your body. Try to keep your urine as close to clear as possible.

If you feel thirsty, you are already suffering from mild dehydration. A drop of just 2% of our body water can cause the following issues (short term or mild dehydration):

- Headaches
- Short-term memory loss
- Loss of concentration
- Lethargy
- Dry skin
- Cognitive impairment
- Digestive problems (constipation)
- Dry mouth
- Decreased urination/dark colored urine
- Sunken eyes

- Flushing
- Baggy eyes, wrinkled skin
- Weakness
- Low blood pressure

If dehydration is not treated, the body begins to shut down. Shock, coma and death can occur if the replenishment of fluids does not take place. Death due to dehydration can occur in 3 days (or less in hot weather) and no one normally lives more than about 5-6 days without water.

### Hot Tip: Water vs. Sports Drinks

Sports drinks aren't necessary, but in small amounts (roughly 8-12 ounces a day) they won't hurt. If you do decide to go for a sports drink, dilute it so it is about half water, half sports drink. This will lessen the unnecessary amount of sugar, salt, and other chemicals that you take in, but it will still taste good.

Fruits and vegetables are also great sources of water. Working these into your diet will do wonders for your hydration level:

- Grapes
- Watermelon
- Apples
- Celery
- Lettuce
- Cucumbers

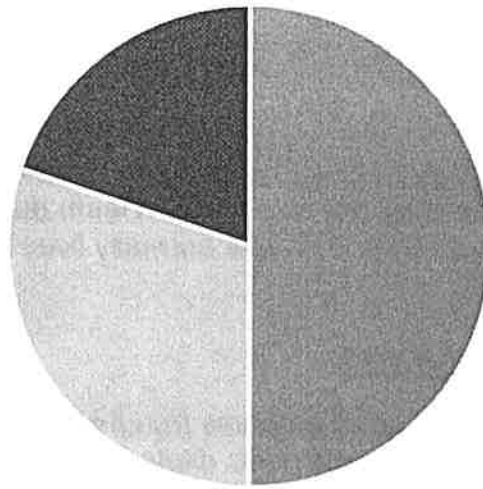
### Summing it Up

You should now have a better idea of what you need to be consuming in order to compete better and feel good while doing it. With the information in this guide, there are a few other things you must understand about nutrition.

First, try to eat a wide variety of foods to ensure you're getting all the essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that you need. Eating a variety of food means eating food you like! You shouldn't have to stay away from treats in order to maintain a healthy diet, you just shouldn't eat them as often. It's okay to break the rules once in a while.

Also, you must understand that everyone's body is different. People may react to some types of food in different ways. Essentially, this guide contains information to help you form good habits. You must be flexible and willing to experiment in order to get the results that most benefit you as an individual. Know your body, and treat it well!

## Nutrition Breakdown



■ Carbs   ■ Protein   ■ Fat




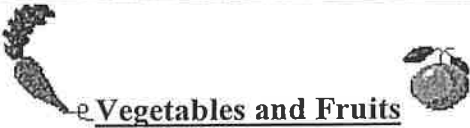



Carbs= 50%

Proteins=30%

Fats=20%

## Eating for optimal performance.

### The "Basic Four" Food Groups

 <p><b>Milk</b></p> <p>4 or more cups for teenagers. 2 or more cups for adults. If you are trying to lose weight you could have smaller serving sizes.</p>	 <p><b>Meats</b></p> <p>2 or more servings every day. If you are trying to lose weight you could have smaller serving sizes. 10-20% of your wrestling diet should be proteins (Excess protein is stored as fat).</p> 
 <p><b>Vegetables and Fruits</b></p> <p>4 or more servings every day. One citrus fruit daily and one dark green or yellow vegetable every other day. If you are trying to lose weight you could have smaller serving sizes.</p> 	 <p><b>Breads and Cereals</b></p> <p>(Whole grain, enriched or restored) 4 or more servings every day. If you are trying to lose weight you could have smaller serving sizes.</p> 

**Stick to the four basic food groups**, not only during wrestling, but all year long. You will find your athletic performances improve with the ousting of fast food/junk food from your daily diet. 50-60% of your wrestling diet should be from Carbohydrates (Glycogen= stored carbohydrates that act as the body's energy source. You can replenish glycogen by repetitive conditioning, and regular consumption of a high carb. diet). Foods high in carbohydrates include spaghetti, macaroni, noodles, rice, potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, stuffing, dried beans, lentils, peas, bread, rolls, tortilla, pretzels, air popped popcorn, crackers, hot cereal, cold cereal, bagels, muffins, banana bread, pancakes, waffles, French toast, fruit, juice, yogurt, ice milk, sherbet, juice bars. Easy on the butter!

**Competition Day—Fuel for the body.** A wrestler needs fuel to perform at duals and tournaments. Bad fuel in a car makes it run poorly, and the same holds true in your body (fast food, junk food, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs). After weigh-ins you should do the following:

1. Immediately get fluids---water! Not fruit juice, not sports drinks---WATER! Human bodies are 70% water, and not Gatorade.
2. When selecting food you must detach your tongue. In other words, forget about taste and eat for performance.
3. You want to eat fast burning carbohydrates, slow burning carbohydrates, and long burning "good" fat.
4. It should go like this after EVERY weigh-in and match.

Water +  
Fruit (apple, OR orange, OR banana) +  
Bagels with cream cheese, OR  
Bagels with peanut butter, OR  
Peanut butter and jelly sandwich, OR  
Nut mix/trail mix

= **High energy for optimal performance!**

## Spartan Pre-Match Routine for Tournaments

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Routine</u>	<u>Where</u>
Pack-it	Have everything you need for your tournament. Warm-ups, shoes, singlet, headgear, music, lucky items, pillow, etc. If you want two sets of headgear—then bring two sets. Make a checklist if you need to.	Onawa
Cut-it	Make weight with as little drama as possible. Ideally, you should be from ½ under to ½ over the night before weigh-ins. Float the weight over night and be ready to dominate the competition in the morning.	Onawa
Fuel-it	<p>A warrior needs fuel to perform. Bad fuel in a car makes it run poorly, and the same holds true in your body. Immediately get fluids—water! Not fruit juice, not sports drinks—WATER! Human bodies are 70% water, and not Gatoraide. When selecting food you must detach your tongue. In other words, forget about taste and eat for performance. You want to eat fast burning carbs, slow burning carbs, and long burning “good” fat. It should go like this after every weigh-in and EVERY match.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Water + Fruit (apples, oranges, &amp; bananas) + Bagels with cream cheese or peanut butter OR Peanut butter and jelly sandwich OR <u>Nut mix =</u> High energy for performance!</p> <p>The fuel-it routine is the best time to talk with your parents/friends.</p>	Combat Post 1- Command Center (The Bleachers)
Rest-it	Sleep. Get horizontal and lay down. You can use the relaxation routine we use in practice. The idea is to get detached from wrestling. Take your mind away from competition and just relax. You should wake up about 30-20 minutes before you wrestle. Once you wake up you should drink water, use the restroom and head to the staging area. You should always “rest-it” after every fuel-it you have.	Command Post 1- Command Center
Visualize-it	Move to the staging area and begin to stretch/warm-up. Make sure you break a sweat. Go through your visualization routine. Decide which dog is controlling you—Big Dog or Little Dog? Insert your Big Dog DVD. Recognize adrenaline for what it is and channel it in a positive way.	Combat Post 2- Staging Area
Compose-it	Confidence will come and go. It’s fleeting especially when you’re called on-deck—your emotions will be surging. Do a Big Dog meltdown check. Chase away your doubts, and flick on your Big Dog switch! In other words, turn on your emotion—“You’re not in the sandbox anymore. You don’t have to share, and it’s not time to be nice—It’s him or you. Regardless of the outcome you’re going to give him the fight of his life.” Believe!	Command Post 3- On-Deck
Dominate-it	Remember: adrenaline is a good thing.	
	This is more attitude than routine. Nonetheless, there is still a mental routine you should go through. While you are wrestling focus on the battle itself, and not the outcome. Focus on attacking and reacting— the Battle! Don’t worry about what anyone will think, don’t worry about your dreams—just attack and react— battle. Once you can do this you will be in the “ZONE.”	Combat Post 4- The Battlefield (The Mat)



## Ten Tips For Safe Weight Management.

- 1. Eat healthy** foods from the four food groups. You must get rid of junk food: fast food, fried foods, candy bars, pop, potato chips, etc.
- 2. Count and reduce calories**, and workout more. Reduced calories + increased exercise = weight loss. Buy a calorie counting book (\$5-\$10) to aid in this process or go to [www.calorie-counter.net](http://www.calorie-counter.net). You should be consuming between 1500 to 2000 calories a day, not per meal! The number of calories you take in depends on how much weight you are trying to lose. If you are currently taking in more calories you will need to reduce the number if you want to lose body fat weight. *Note: A Big Mac alone has 580 calories, and if you get the super-sized meal (fries and large pop) you are taking in 1200 calories!* The following is a formula wrestlers can use to estimate their caloric needs:
  1. Take your body weight and multiply it by 10.  
 $194 \times 10 = 1940$
  2. Multiply the number you get by 1.7.  
 $1940 \times 1.7 = 3298$  calories a day if I want to maintain my current weight (194) as long as I keep up with my normal physical exercises.
  3. If you wish to decrease your body weight. Decrease the calories you are taking in and increase your workout time. You should be able to lose 2 pounds per week and still maintain optimal performance. Wrestlers should take in a minimum of 1500-2000 calories a day.
- 3. Be disciplined.** The first weigh-in is always the toughest, because your body is still familiar with your old eating habits. Your stomach will have an empty feeling when you start, because it has expanded to hold a diet of 3500 plus calories per day. Over time your stomach will shrink to fit a smaller diet of 2000 calories, and the empty feeling will go away. By the end of the season most wrestlers have no problem making weight. Remember that in January you will get a two-pound growth allowance.
- 4. Eat breakfast.** Even if you are managing your weight it is a good idea to take in a couple hundred calories in the morning. Why? Because it affects your **metabolism—the rate your body burns calories**. If you don't eat a little something in the morning your body assumes you are unable to eat and automatically slows down your metabolism to conserve calories. Exercise in the morning will also help to speed up your metabolism. Insufficient amounts (lack of) protein in your diet will also slow down your metabolism.
- 5. Work hard in practice.** Most wrestlers will lose around 3-5 pounds per West Monona wrestling practice. Wrestlers with 20% bf or more tend to lose closer to 7-8 pounds per practice. Most of this is water weight lost. However, you will most likely burn 2000-2500 calories per practice. With your calorie intake decreasing, and your calorie burning increasing—you will lose weight. You must workout more than scheduled practice times if you need to lose more to get to your weight class. Again, I come back to this simple equation: **Reduced calories + increased exercise = weight loss**. You will find that your body "floats" or loses two pounds through your sleep at night. Short-term dehydration (a period of 1-5 hours) won't hurt your health or athletic performance. **Long-term dehydration** should certainly be avoided, as it will have a negative affect on your personality, health, and athletic performance. You should remember that as you get closer to 7% bf everything you consume factors into your weight. For example: I'm in the locker-room ready to weigh-in at 171 pounds, but before I get on the scale I drink a Gatorade and eat a power-bar. You will now weigh 173.5 pounds. You didn't make weight! The short-term is more about food and beverages actual weight than it is about calories.
- 6. Don't binge eat after weigh-ins.** This is the biggest mistake young wrestlers make. You have just made 171 pounds the right way—you worked hard exercising and managed your calorie intake. Why start over next week at 182 pounds? Be disciplined and follow your weight management plan.
- 7. Stay away from creatine** and other questionable supplements. Creatine is naturally occurring in the body, is used by weight lifters & football players as a weight gainer, and is legal. However, it puts weight on, while you are trying to lose it. Creatine also dehydrates the muscles in your body. Creatine increases body weight mainly by promoting water retention in the large muscle groups. Creatine's side effects include diarrhea, loss of stamina, and muscle cramping. Ask me about supplements if you have any questions. You should get all the vitamins and minerals you need in a balanced diet from the four food groups. However, a daily multivitamin is not a bad idea considering the stress and workload your body and mind are put through during the season.
- 8. Most high school state qualifiers**, college wrestlers, and Olympic level wrestlers compete with body fats of 5-9%. 7% has been set by the IHSAA as the standard minimal body fat percentage. All wrestlers must go through a body composition test to determine their lowest body weight and weight class at 7% bf.
- 9. Refrain from using** alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Throughout the season I'll be reminding you of the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Even the so-called "soft drug" of marijuana is dangerous. Marijuana is a bridge drug, which leads individuals into using harder drugs. Worst of all—Marijuana robs you of your ambition and initiative! I can think of nothing worse than being lazy and not caring about anything. Tobacco is no less dangerous. We are all familiar with tobacco causing cancer, but it also has a negative affect on your athletic performance. Smoking will diminish your lungs' capacity for oxygen storage. Nicotine from cigarettes and **chewing tobacco** narrows your blood vessels and retards their ability to deliver oxygen through blood to your vital organs and muscles. **ALL OF THESE VICES HURT YOUR BODY, ESPECIALLY YOUR CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONING.** **Steroids** are also illegal and will damage your body.
- 10. Be mentally tough.** I know it's not easy to be disciplined.

