

# **MAXIMIZING WRESTLING PERFORMANCE** **THROUGH HEALTHY EATING**

Taken from the video of the same title produced by the National Wrestling Coaches Association.

The information provided here comes from the video produced by the NWCA. It is provided in print form so coaches can make copies to distribute to wrestlers & parents. The information is provided by Karen Wetherall, Ms, RD, LD, Sports Nutritionist at the University of Tennessee, Lisa McAnulty, PhD, RD, Sports Nutritionist with Appalachian State University, and Debra Vinci, Dr.PH, RD, LDN Sports Nutritionist with Appalachian State University.

*Question #1: Why are high carbohydrate foods important to wrestlers and what are some high carbohydrate foods?*

**High carbohydrate foods provide the muscles with readily available energy needed for optimal performance.** Carbohydrates are provided in foods such as breads, cereals, rice, corn, pretzels, pasta, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, and fruit and vegetable juices.

*Question #2: How much protein does a wrestler need and what are some sources of high quality protein?*

**About 15-20% of a wrestler's calories should come from protein.** Specifically, a wrestler should consume about .6 grams of protein daily for each pound of body weight. A 152-pound wrestler should consume about 91 grams of protein per day.

Good sources of protein include: 3 ounces of lean meat, poultry or fish = 21 grams; ½ cup of beans or peas = 7 grams; 1 egg = 7 grams; 1/4 cup cottage cheese = 7 grams; 1 ounce of cheese = 7 grams; 8 ounces of low fat milk or yogurt = 8 grams.

*Question #3: Should wrestlers use any nutritional supplements?*

If they are concerned about maintaining a healthy diet **they may choose to take a multivitamin, but should not need any other supplements.**

*Question #4: What should wrestlers eat between the time they weigh in and compete?*

**Drinking fluids is the most important thing.** Water, or a sports drink containing no more than 8% carbohydrate are both good choices. Eating fruit, turkey on bread, or a cereal bar are also good choices.

*Question #5: What should wrestlers drink between weigh-in and competition?*

**About 1 hour before competition they should drink 2 cups of fluids that contain some carbohydrate and electrolytes, especially sodium and potassium.** About 15 - 20 minutes before competition they should drink another 1 ½ - 2 cups of similar fluid or water. **Any fluid consumed within 1 hour of competition or a workout should not contain more than 60 calories per 8-ounce serving.** Drinking fluid with more calories than this delays the speed the fluid is absorbed by the body and may cause an upset stomach during exercise.

*Question #6: What should wrestlers eat during an all-day tournament?*

**Fluids are the most important, followed by carbohydrates & a little protein.** Low-fat chocolate milk, Carnation Instant Breakfast mix, or anything mentioned in question #5 are good choices.

Baby carrots, celery, fruit, low fat granola bars, cereal bars, and low fat yogurt are all good choices. When eating prepackaged snack foods, choose those that have 4 grams of carbohydrate for every 1 gram of fat.

*Question #7: What should wrestlers drink during all-day tournaments?*

**About 2 hours before competition they should drink 2 cups of fluid. This fluid may contain about 180 calories per 8-ounce serving.** About 1 hour before competition they should drink 2 cups of fluids that contain some carbohydrate and electrolytes, especially sodium and potassium. About 15 - 20 minutes before competition they should drink another 1 ½ - 2 cups of similar fluid or water. Any fluid consumed within 1 hour of competition or a workout should not contain more than 60 calories per 8-ounce serving. Drinking fluid with more calories than this delays the speed the fluid is absorbed by the body and may cause an upset stomach during exercise.

*Question #8: What should a wrestler eat after a workout or a match to help boost recovery?*

**Fluids are a must.** Fruit and vegetable juices are good. Anything that is good between the weigh-in and competition, and for an all-day tournament is also good after a workout or competition. **Within one hour after exercise wrestlers can benefit from eating foods that contain protein.** See questions #9 and #10 for healthy protein choices.

*Question #9: What kind of food preparation should be considered when trying to lose weight?*

**Try to eat fewer processed foods.** For example, eat more raw fruits and vegetables. Choose lean meats, tuna salad with lite mayonnaise, salad with turkey and low fat dressing, stir fry with only a little oil for cooking, lean meat sandwiches and pasta.

*Question #10: Is it possible to eat healthy at a fast food restaurant?*

**Yes, especially if the coach and wrestlers plan ahead.** Choosing a fast food restaurant such as Subway or discussing healthy, low fat options at other restaurants are important. Healthy choices would include such foods as turkey, lean roast beef, ham, bean burritos, rice, pasta, salads with turkey or ham & low fat dressings and baked chips. For breakfast, cold & hot cereals and pancakes, waffles, french toast, without extra butter are good choices. To substantially lower the fat, skip the bacon and sausage.

Other thoughts are to **choose the foods designated on the menu as “heart healthy choices.”** Also, skip the butter, gravies, special sauces, etc. Super sizing an order can easily double the fat content compared to a regular serving size.

*Question #11: What foods are good “lite,” or heart healthy options?*

**Any foods that are steamed, broiled, char broiled, boiled, poached, grilled, baked, or in its own juice are good choices.** Avoid foods that are fried, crispy, buttery, Au Gratin, or served with gravy on top.

*Question #12: What are the signs of dehydration?*

**An athlete can lose about 1% of their body weight through fluid loss with no apparent signs of dehydration. So it’s very important for the athlete to drink fluids when any signs of dehydration occur.** Symptoms of dehydration are progressive. They include: thirst, dry mouth & throat, flushed skin, fatigue, headache, loss of performance, weakness, increased heart rate, decreased sweating, confusion, dizziness, and collapse into a coma.

*Question #13: What are the best ways to prevent dehydration and its negative effects on performance?*

**First, always avoid voluntary dehydration. This can occur through excessive exercise, saunas, rubber suits, not drinking fluids, using diuretics, etc. Methods of quick weight, which cause dehydration, are unsafe and against the rules.** Next, be sure to drink fluids on a regular basis and concentrate on fluid intake during the 24 hours before exercise or competition. Be sure to drink fluids during the 2 hours before exercise or competition using the guidelines already provided. **Last, monitor weight loss and urine color. When adequately hydrated, one’s urine should be pale or clear in color. Every pound of weight lost during exercise should be replaced by drinking 24 ounces of fluid within several hours after exercise.**

*Question #14: Is it better to drink water or a sports drink?*

**There is nothing wrong with drinking water. It does not contain electrolytes or carbohydrate which may improve performance in some cases, but it will not be detrimental to performance either.** Sports drinks can improve performance in some situations, but can also be harmful to performance if used

improperly. Discussion has already taken place, in questions #5 and #7, about how much carbohydrate a sports drink should contain to improve, or not be harmful to performance. It is also important to avoid fructose in a sports drink. Fructose is not absorbed well by the body and may cause stomach upset. Sports drinks should not contain caffeine as it will dehydrate the body further.

**Here is the formula for a home made thirst quencher that is easy to make and much cheaper than commercial brands:**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup honey;  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon lite salt;  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup lemon juice; and  $7 \frac{1}{2}$  cups luke warm water. This drink is made with luke warm water so the honey will be dissolved. It can be cooled after making it. The drink contains about 60 calories, 72 milligrams of sodium and 85 milligrams of potassium per 8-ounce serving.

12/02