

Nutritional Considerations for Wrestling and all Athletes

Wrestling season is creeping up on us and what does that mean to our wrestlers...making weight. Wrestling made weight classes to level the playing field; who wants to watch a heavy weight beat up on a light weight? In most scenarios wrestlers have to cut weight to fit into their "class." Very rarely do wrestlers have to gain weight for their weight class.

As an athletic trainer I see athletes cut weight unhealthily all the time. I know what they should be doing and what they are doing isn't the same thing. Annette Snyder, Registered Dietitian, at Iowa Specialty Hospital, stated that there are some really good resources that combine efforts from the American Dietetic Association and from the American College of Sports Medicine.

Here is what we do know:

- Food = Energy
- What you eat effects your performance
- Dehydration DECREASES your performance

How can we take what we know and use that to help us make weight and have the highest performance possible?

- 3500 calories = 1 pound; so if you cut/add 500 calories out of your diet you would lose/gain 1 pound per week (500 calories times 7days = 3500 calories)
- Eat healthy foods. Try to get the most nutrition out of your calories. Eating lean proteins will help you feel fuller and your body will use them to build and rebuild muscle to help your performance.
 - What are some healthy proteins?
 - Egg whites, chicken breast, fish, 1% cottage cheese, string cheese, almonds, 93% ground beef
 - Be careful to not eat too much protein because it is hard on the kidneys and can cause dehydration
 - Athletes should consume between 1.2-1.4 grams of protein per kilogram body weight. (1oz of meat=7g of protein)
 - Example: 132 lbs individual (60 kg) → (60 times1.2=72g) and (60 times1.4=84g)
 - A 132 pound individual should eat between 72-84 grams of protein per day. And if this individual were to choose to eat meat for that protein they would have 7.2-8.4 ounces of meat. On most local menus there steak options **EXCEED** the daily recommended intake!
 - Check the wrapper of your favorite protein bar for the sugar content.
 - Daily limit of sugar content is 20-30 grams; some protein bars have 30-40 grams of sugar!
 - Pick a protein bar with 10 grams of sugar or less

- When cutting calories we are depriving ourselves of nutrients that we need. We are cutting out electrolytes such as sodium and potassium. To help with this, take a daily multivitamin. This will help get you some of the nutrition you need since you may not be getting it from the foods you are eating.
- Skip the caffeine.
 - Caffeine will dehydrate you and that soda you love makes bones weaker. We store 90% of the calcium we will EVER have by age 20! So put down the DEW!
- Stay hydrated.
 - Water makes everything work better. Our hearts don't have to pump as hard because our blood moves easier. Nutrients can be absorbed at the rate they are supposed to and they can be transported to where they are needed quickly.

We look forward to seeing our local wrestlers on the mat! Hopefully some of these tips will help you make wise decisions when selecting what you want to eat and get to your weight class safely.