

Nutrition

Think of your wrestlers' as a sports car.

"You need power from the rear axle and you need tires, as well as fuel. I like to have wrestlers think of food as fuel for the body. You have to have it to keep going. Putting better fuel in the tank always helps get more miles off a single tank, it burns more efficiently."

This can be achieved by eating the right amounts of lean protein, complex carbohydrates, and fibrous carbohydrates.

Keep in mind that some foods can have a negative long-term effect on performance, so it's best to avoid soda, cookies, candy, caffeinated energy drinks, chips and heavily processed foods. This is, however, easier said than done when it comes to youth wrestling. The easiest way to get a child eating healthy food is for the parents to provide healthy food and responsible portions of food each day. "Youth wrestlers are not the ones with the checkbook or debit card at the supermarket checkout line. Parents need to be on board with proper nutrition if you want to help." YOU as the parent make the decisions for you wrestlers at this age.

I understand reality and kids occasionally make poor nutrition choices, but when that happens, emphasize moderation of it. "Soda tastes good, but often doesn't quench your thirst and is a high-sugar, high-calorie drink," and Energy drinks are artificial energy. They may give you a boost, but often take you lower than where you started. It's about making solid decisions. Emphasize the importance of it. Water between practices and throughout tournaments benefits more. No kid likes just water unless it tastes good. Find a balance of beneficial fuel and fuel for taste. "It will pay off in the end."

Proper nutrition is a big factor to win those matches late in the third period or overtime that require more energy. If you are fueling with junk you won't have that advantage, they will run out of gas. Teammates should help each other stick with their meal plans because eating is always the toughest thing to stick with. Parents are not with the kids all day long so teaching team work on meals or snacks helps.

Good Carbs:

Vegetables: All of them. It is best to eat a variety of vegetables every day.

Whole fruits: Apples, bananas, strawberries, etc.

Nuts: Almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, etc.

Whole grains: Choose grains that are truly whole, as in pure oats, quinoa, brown rice, etc.

Tubers: Potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc.

Bad Carbs:

Sugary drinks: Coca cola, Pepsi, Vitaminwater, etc. Sugary drinks are some of the unhealthiest things you can put into your body.

Fruit juices: Unfortunately, fruit juices may have similar metabolic effects as sugar-sweetened beverages.

White bread: These are refined carbohydrates that are low in essential nutrients and bad for metabolic health. This applies to most commercially available breads.

Pastries, cookies and cakes: These tend to be very high in sugar and refined wheat.

Ice cream: Most types of ice cream are very high in sugar, although there are exceptions.

Candies and chocolates: If you're going to eat chocolate, choose quality dark chocolate.

French fries and potato chips: Whole potatoes are healthy, but french fries and potato chips are not healthy.

Tournament Tips

Understand the importance of water. Water keeps you hydrated and keeps your entire body running properly. Eating right and fueling for success during a tournament requires drinking plenty of water.

A meal full of complex carbohydrates the **night before a tournament**, along with just a bit of protein will help load glycogen in your muscle cells to ensure competitors will have energy deep into the tournament. This also helps keep blood sugar stable during a match.

Examples of these foods are grapes, apples, oranges, and trail mix. Those are also good foods to eat throughout a tournament. They are not filling and provide needed energy.

Wrestlers who use an electrolyte replacement while rehydrating **after weigh-ins** should also include carbohydrate-rich snacks such as **bagels, graham crackers, pretzels, granola bars, bananas, yogurt, or pudding cups.**

Post-match, wrestlers should include a recovery meal that incorporates carbohydrates, proteins, and fluids. A couple of good choices include **low-fat chocolate milk and nutrition shakes free from supplements.** Rice cakes are also a good option.

When refueling in the **evening during a multi-day tournament**, try to eat clean foods. These are nutrient dense foods that supply your body with the vitamins and minerals with the least number of calories and **include a good mix of proteins such as whole eggs, almonds, beef, avocados, chicken and almond butter, and good carbohydrates such as whole fruits, nuts and sweet potatoes**

Don't cut the carbohydrates because it's what all the trendy diets say. Without a liberal amount of carbohydrates, you will burn out and possibly get injured.

Don't forget about **post-tournament nutrition.** **Chicken with white rice, or a protein shake and rice cakes** are helpful. This should be consumed within an hour of the tournament—on the way home, for example, if it's a long ride.

Create healthy habits. Eating right doesn't need to be viewed as punishment. Make it enjoyable and focus on the benefits, not the negatives. Do not reward wrestlers with binge eating at fast food restaurants but supplement with protein and vegetables from Golden Corral and Outback Steak house.

Wrestling is the third strenuous sport in the world. It takes the correct amount of FUEL to keep wrestlers healthy and safe during the season. If the parent helps with the wrestler's eating habits the performance of the wrestler on the mat and off will be much more rewarding.