

Competition Day Nutrition

Wrestlers walk a nutritional tight rope during tournament competition, what to eat to make weight for day two and what you need to compete at a high level can be a struggle. Some research suggests that as many as 408 calories are burned during each match. These calories are in addition to what each individual needs on a daily basis based on their height and weight. Because of this, it is necessary for wrestlers to “graze” throughout the day, eating and drinking small amounts, frequently. You must keep in mind that it is important to not eat too much too quickly, as this can lead to feeling “weighted down” and lethargic.¹ Fluids are also an important nutritional component during competition. They of course rehydrate you after each match, but also aid in getting the nutrients you need to compete to your muscles more quickly. There is research that recommends you drink eight ounces of fluid every half hour during competition, but check with your coach for his or her recommendations². Your energy needs will best met by eating easily digested foods that are also high in complex carbohydrates, below are some suggestions of the types of foods and drinks to consider.³

Fruits: Fruits like bananas and oranges have high sugar contents, so eating one of these should give you a good spike of energy. Generally speaking, you can't go wrong with fruit.⁴ Apples, oranges, grapes and bananas are your best bet.

Light sandwiches: Peanut butter and jelly or honey is a battle-tested, pre-match wrestling meal. Turkey and chicken are other good choices to eat right before a match. Go easy on the condiments (if at all), but add extra veggies.⁴

Sports drinks containing no more than 70 calories per 8 ounce serving, Gatorade and Powerade are both within this range.

Bagels (try and stay away from adding cream cheese), low fat muffins, cereal bars and whole-wheat bread with jam or honey provide the complex carbohydrates you need.

ALL TOURNAMENT DAY FOODS SHOULD BE HIGH IN CARBOHYDRATES AND LOW IN FAT AND PROTEIN.

Lastly, **compete and learn**, with enough competition, you will figure out which foods help you wrestle your best. Use these tips as a guideline; however, don't forget that everyone has different dietary needs, so the amount and types of foods each wrestler eats will vary. As long as you are eating healthy, natural foods, deviating from these suggestions is acceptable if it helps you achieve peak performance. Always consult with your coach before making any changes to your diet or eating regimen. Good luck!

Next Installment: Post Weigh-in Nutrition

1. <http://longislandwrestling.org/liwa/sportsmedicine/nwcahealthyeating.htm>
2. <http://hometeamsonline.com/teams/default.asp?u=HEADBUCK&s=htosports&p=newsstory&newsID=14525>
3. <http://wrestling.isport.com/wrestling-guides/what-to-eat-before-a-wrestling-match>
4. <http://wrestling.isport.com/wrestling-guides/what-to-eat-before-a-wrestling-match>