

What Should Wrestlers Eat After Weigh Ins?

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One of the most common questions I hear from athletes, parents and coaches is some variation of the age old “what should I eat and drink after weigh ins?”

Often times a wrestler is in a (sometimes chronically) dehydrated state and has been at a calorie deficit for much of the preceding week, if not longer. Now that they have made weight the key is to rehydrate properly and replenish the glycogen that was not properly replaced from the week’s workouts. This is a delicate process and will continue thru out the day during tournaments, and it can easily be derailed by poor planning or gluttonous instincts. Eat and drink too much and you will be feeling sluggish, or worse, making frequent trips to the restroom. Insufficient rehydration and continued restricted carbohydrate intake can be a detriment to performance and inter-match recovery.

So what is the best strategy? Let’s start at the beginning, immediately post weigh in:

Rehydrate

The most crucial thing is to rehydrate immediately using an electrolyte based drink. The sodium, potassium and calcium that was lost in your sweat must be replaced to avoid cramping and ensure that your muscles will fire correctly. It is recommended that 1.5L of water is consumed for every kilogram of bodyweight lost, so a wrestler that cut 4lbs of water weight will need to consume 3L of water to rehydrate. HOWEVER – it is not

recommended or practical to drink all of that at once. The reality is in that scenario with a 1 hour dual meet weigh in, the wrestler that cut 4lbs cannot be completely rehydrated before the match. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a 132lb adolescent consume 9oz fluids every 20 minutes during sports competition.

A safe approach would be for the wrestler to drink as much as they want (until feeling satisfied) immediately post weigh in, then consume an additional 8oz of fluids every 15-20 minutes after. This same strategy can be utilized thru out the day during tournaments. I would recommend electrolytes (preferably with branch chain amino acids such as Max Effort Muscle's Amino Recovery) taken with fluids post weigh in and again after each match during competition.

Replenish

After limiting calories to make weight it can be tempting to grab some pizza or ice cream from the concession stand. Don't do it. You want to avoid high fat and high fiber foods (and in my opinion, other hard to digest foods such as dairy) as it will slow down digestion. The key is to replenish glycogen stores in the muscles and give your body some fast energy with some high glycemic carbohydrates. To replenish glycogen stores in the muscles it is recommended to consume 1-1.85g carbohydrate per kilogram of bodyweight. every 60 minutes. So using the same 132lb (60kg) wrestler as the example, they will need between 60 to 111gr high glycemic carbohydrates per hour, or after each match. What's an easy way to achieve that? How about a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a banana?

- **2 slices bread – 30g carbohydrates**
- **2T Jelly – 30g carbohydrates**
- **1T Peanut Butter – 7g carbohydrates**
- **Banana – 25g carbohydrates**
- **Total – 92g carbohydrates**

That must you right in the middle of that range, and an easy way to up the number without adding a lot of food volume to your stomach is drinking some of your fluids in juice form (grape juice has 20g carbs per 40z) or snacking on some raisins. Repeat this same protocol after each match for the day. Wait until the victory dinner to pig out and to eat any big servings of protein or fat.

Anti-catabolic

Another factor to think about during competition, particularly during the day long grind of a tournament, is to avoid the breakdown of muscle tissue. While I don't recommend eating a lot of meat or other protein rich foods during the day, you will need *some* protein. If you have to eat some meat during the day, go with something low fat such as chicken breast or egg whites. Consuming a serving of Amino Recovery (10g BCAA, 5g Glutamine, electrolytes) after weigh ins and after each match during the day should be sufficient to repair muscle damage and keep your body from slipping into a catabolic state.

Match Day Cheat Sheet:

- Electrolytes and fluids immediately post weigh in
- Additional 8oz fluids every 15-20 minutes

- 1.5L water per kg water weight lost during weight cut. This needs to be consumed over the course of the day IN ADDITION to normal water consumption.
- 1-1.85g high glycemic carbohydrates post weigh in and after every match
- avoid “heavy” hard to digest foods
- limit protein besides BCAA and Glutamine