



NCWA

National Collegiate Wrestling Association



WEIGHT CONTROL PLAN

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Weight Control Plan is designed to protect wrestlers from unhealthy weight reduction practices and to promote proper control over the weight of the young athletes. All wrestlers and coaches without exception must follow the following procedures.

COMMENTS ON WEIGHT LOSS:

Any person that has participated in wrestling has often entertained the notion that if he were to move down to the next lower weight class that he could win more matches. This may be true in some cases. However, **PULLING WEIGHT IS TO BE DISCOURAGED**. The use of a sweat box, rubberized weight reduction suits, saunas or any similar process that induces excessive sweating for rapid weight loss is strictly forbidden by the National Collegiate Wrestling Association and the NCAA. All coaches are encouraged to learn how to use some method of measuring body fat in determining the proper weight class for an individual wrestler. Consultation with a physician is also recommended.

--- WEIGHT CONTROL PLAN ---

No other sport creates as much weight awareness among athletes as wrestling. Unfortunately, too much awareness may result in reckless dietary and nutritional behavior. The responsibility for a successful and safe approach to weight control lies equally with the wrestler, his coach and his parents. Any organized plan to accomplish weight control must be based on fact, not fad. Sound nutritional information must be the basis for any plan. A wrestler should manage his weight with this single guideline in mind:

BODY COMPOSITION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN BODY WEIGHT IN DETERMINING ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE.

To put it another way, the wrestler with the largest percentage of **usable weight** is in the best condition to compete. **Usable weight in wrestling means muscle weight**. Eating large quantities of high fat food items contributes to **unusable weight (body fat)**. Excessive fat will limit your mobility and flexibility, forces your heart to work harder and puts strain on your hip and leg joints. Similarly, starvation diets and dehydration tend to either diminish muscle mass or interfere with efficient digestion and muscle function. Either way, these poor dietary practices diminish usable weight and reduce performance.

To set up a weight control plan, the following factors must be determined:

- 1) The wrestler's body composition
- 2) The wrestler's ideal competitive weight
- 3) A long-term plan for reaching and maintaining the ideal weight
- 4) Sensible eating habits that promote caloric regulation and still provide all essential nutrients

It's up to us as wrestlers, coaches and parents to address this area with as much concern as our preparation of technique or conditioning or any other aspect of a wrestling program. Before a wrestler can determine how much (if any) weight he needs to lose to reach his ideal weight, he must know his body composition. The human body is composed of **lean tissue** (muscle, bone, blood, organs) and **fat tissue**. **Fat tissue** can be divided into **essential fat** which protects vital organs (about 5% in men, 10% in women) and **nonessential fat**. Athletes who are well conditioned have a low percentage of body fat.

Body composition can be determined using skinfold measurement or underwater weighing. If the coach is not equipped to test the wrestler and he does not have an athletic trainer, check with a physical education department at a local college, doctor, sports club or training center. Skinfold testing is easy to do and only takes a few minutes. Research studies suggest that wrestlers should strive to maintain a level of 5% to 12% body fat; the optimum performance for wrestlers being from 7% to 10%.

If the percentage of body fat is already between 7-10%, the wrestler is probably at or near his ideal wrestling weight. It would be foolish to try to lose 5-10 pounds to qualify for the next lower weight class. Losing more weight would likely weaken the wrestler and have an adverse effect on performance. This is particularly important for high school wrestlers who are in a very active growth spurt and need to have a higher weight allowance.

If the wrestler's body fat level is higher than it should be, the wrestler should begin a sensible reduction program to bring it down. Losing weight properly takes discipline and patience. The most healthful way to accomplish weight loss is to maintain or increase exercise while reducing food intake. Starvation and crash diets are not effective because muscle tissue begins to break down. As a result, some of the weight loss will come from muscle mass (usable weight), leaving the wrestler with reduced strength. Using any type of dietary weight loss pill is forbidden. These pills tend to achieve weight loss primarily from water weight rather than losing weight by reducing fat cells. Water is an essential source of fluids in any program.

To lose fat weight, wrestlers need to reduce the number of calories they consume while maintaining or increasing their conditioning program. For each pound of fat a wrestler wants to lose, they need to eliminate 3500 calories from their diet. To lose 2 pounds in one week, for example, requires an energy deficit of 7000 calories or 1000 calories per day. That is a lot of calories to remove from a wrestler's diet at a time when they need increased energy. A better way to lose two pounds is to eat 500 fewer calories each day and burn an additional 500 calories each day for a week. However, under no circumstances should male athletes consume fewer than 1800-2000 calories per day. Good nutrition is absolutely essential to a growing athlete during high school years. Bone growth, in particular, may be especially sensitive to the effects of bad nutrition caused by starvation and crash diets.

Weight management should start early. Weight loss or weight gain is most effectively and safely accomplished gradually rather than quickly. This means knowing the weight class in which the wrestler intends to compete and starting a program of nutrition and workouts designed to help the wrestler achieve his ideal body composition. Crash diets are not the answer. Depriving the body of food and/or water will decrease the energy capacity for workouts and competition and could lead to dehydration. In addition, wrestlers are almost certain to gain back any weight they lose as soon as they resume their normal diet. Give the body the nutrition and consistency it requires in order for it to work efficiently. Yo-yo dieting (starving in order to make weight and then eating everything in sight) will make a good wrestler become an average wrestler when it comes to match time.

It makes much more sense to restructure the wrestler's eating and exercise habits on a permanent basis. Good dietary information is available from a variety of books and articles. The coach should have this information or will be able to help the wrestler find it. Just as a car runs best with a full tank of the proper fuel, a wrestler's body will perform at its maximum when it is filled with the right 'nutritional fuel.' For athletes, that fuel is complex carbohydrates, obtained from foods such as cereal, bread, pasta grains and baked potatoes.

Carbohydrates, protein and fat supply calories. Together they add up to the total caloric intake. Unfortunately, wrestlers often spend too much time worrying about total calories and not enough time counting carbohydrate calories. Many foods contain carbohydrates, but some are better sources than others are. That is important, because 60-65% of the total calories a wrestler consumes should come from carbohydrates. Of the remaining calories, approximately 15% should come from protein and the remaining 20% from fat. For example, a daily diet of 3200 total calories should contain approximately 2000 carbohydrate calories (500g of carbohydrates). Clearly, wrestlers need to eat foods high in carbohydrates and low in fat in order to support strength development and generate energy for workouts and competition.

Concentrate on **complex carbohydrates** such as those found in whole grain cereals and breads, vegetables and fruits. They give an even distribution of fuel for energy production. Avoid the **simple carbohydrates** found in soft drinks, candy bars and other sweets. Foods such as hamburgers, chips, mayonnaise and candy bars contain high levels of fat making them poor sources of nutrition for athletes.

Take responsibility for the diet and begin to read labels. Most labels list the number of grams of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. One thing to remember is that 1-gram of fat (9 calories) has more than twice the calories as 1 gram of carbohydrates (4 calories). A high carbohydrate/low fat diet will improve endurance. Improved endurance will improve wrestling performance throughout the season.

Remember: a balance between calories consumed and calories burned through exercise are a key in weight control. To lose weight, you should decrease your caloric intake and increase your caloric output--a simple equation. Become familiar with the caloric value of foods and activities. For instance, a candy bar may contain 300-400 calories, but a large apple would contain only 100 calories and a 6-ounce can of V8 juice contains only 35 calories. A mile run will burn 85-150 calories while wrestling burns 10-14 calories per minute.

Wrestlers must burn more calories that they consume in order to lose unwanted fat. They can adjust their diet and exercise to provide for gradual weight loss. To lose one pound of fat a week, the wrestler must reduce his calorie intake by 500 calories each day. Seldom should anyone have to drop below 1800-2000 calories per day. Doing so will jeopardize the proper provision of vitamins, minerals and fuels for proper body function.

SUMMARY

Use common sense and good judgement throughout the season to achieve the optimum percentage of body fat of 7-10%. Use skinfold measurement or underwater weighing to determine the body fat and weight class that is best for the wrestler. The following tips should help the wrestler achieve a safe and rewarding season:

- 1) Eat three balanced meals a day in moderate portions. Try to include foods from all the major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, meat/fish, milk/cheese
- 2) Avoid high fat, high sugar foods and snacks such as chips, soft drinks, mayonnaise, candy bars, desserts
- 3) Emphasize foods that are high in complex carbohydrates such as cereals, rice, pasta, breads, baked potatoes, muffins, and vegetables
- 4) Use skim milk instead of whole milk. Substitute diet drinks for regular, high sugar soft drinks. Better yet, drink water or fruit juices. Drink 8 glasses of water daily.
- 5) Do not snack between meals. If you must snack, eat fresh vegetables or fruit.
- 6) Stick to your diet and workout program and you will get the results you want. It takes time to accomplish your goals. Be patient.
- 7) Remember: Good nutrition is something a wrestler must apply each day throughout the season and not just the day before a match. If a wrestler takes short cuts, expect to pay the price in reduced performance.

The National Collegiate Wrestling Association does not encourage or condone rapid weight loss. Weight loss should not exceed 2 pounds each week. Remember, good nutrition is something you apply everyday throughout the season (throughout life).

The NCWA wants every wrestler to compete in a positive, safe environment. Coaches, parents and wrestlers need to become informed about the proper methods of weight control so that the goal weight can be reached sensibly. Using a long-term approach will help the wrestler during his competitive years and it will help in later years to combat health problems such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

If you (parent, coach, wrestler) feel that weight control is not being done sensibly (an overly zealous wrestler or coach), please consult a specialist in sports nutrition or research the latest nutritional information in order to become more informed about proper nutrition.

Remember: too much body fat, as well as too little body fat, is harmful.

NCWA Weight Classes: (11)

125 - 133 - 141 - 149 - 157 - 165 - 174 - 184 - 197 – 235 (min 184) - 285 (min 184)