WEIGHTLIFTING
EATING FOR YOUR SPORT

Your sport:

Olympic Weightlifting demands extreme strength and power to lift very heavy weights in a controlled manner. The two disciplines within this sport are the ‘snatch’ and ‘clean & jerk’ lifts. All lifters compete within a bodyweight class (8 classes for men and 7 classes for women) and an age division (youth, junior, senior, masters). Within a competition, lifters have 3 attempts at the snatch and clean & jerk. The winner is the competitor who manages to lift the heaviest combined weight of their best attempts in both of these lifts in their respective bodyweight category.

As an Olympic Weightlifting competition may last over 3 hours from the commencement of the weigh-in through until the last attempt, lifters need good nutritional preparation to fuel them throughout the competition.

Olympic weightlifters may train 2 or 3 times each day. Sessions will vary from technique based training to very heavy weights sessions which aim to increase strength and power. Weightlifters are very fast and powerful athletes and many lifters maintain relatively low body fat levels to optimise their power to weight ratios.

In weightlifting, performance is based on the ability to produce short explosive bursts of power which relies almost completely on the anaerobic energy system. Other energy systems will also be used between lifts and during some training sessions to replenish the muscles with fuel. Good balanced nutrition is essential to optimise muscle recovery and repair.

TRAINING DIET:

Weightlifting is one of a number of sports where age-old nutrition habits and training techniques are passed down from generation to generation. This commonly includes diets with a huge amount of protein and very little carbohydrate. Although such practices are based on experience, many have no scientific basis and are unlikely to assist with performance.

Regardless of age or level, weightlifters should aim for a healthy balanced diet, aiming to include:

- Fruits and vegetables – aim for a variety of colours
- Breads and cereals - Pasta, rice, low fat noodles, starchy vegetables (e.g. kumara, potato), bread, oats, breakfast cereals
- Dairy products – choose reduced fat varieties including milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Protein rich foods – including lean meat, poultry (e.g. chicken), fish/seafood, eggs, tofu and pulses
- Healthy fats including vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and avocado

PROTEIN

Protein is very important for lifters as it is vital for muscle mass growth and recovery. New lifters tend to have higher protein needs than experienced lifters*. They are more likely to be aiming for increased muscle mass and large muscle growth, whereas well trained lifters are more likely to be focussed on maintaining mass. The timing of protein intake is also an important consideration. For maximum growth and repair, protein should be included in the meal and snacks both before and after training. Between 20-25g is normally ideal**. This is roughly equivalent to 1 can of tuna/salmon (180g), 150g meat/chicken or a 3-4 egg omelette.

* New lifters
** Maximum recommended daily protein intake
Although protein supplements are common with lifters, there are plenty of foods high in protein that can be included in all meals and snacks. Therefore supplements may not be necessary for all lifters. Lean meat, skinless chicken, fish, eggs, dairy foods, nuts, seeds and pulses are all examples of protein rich foods. It is, however, possible to overdo the protein, as your body can only deal with so much. More than 2g per kg of bodyweight a day has been shown to have no added benefit for strength gains.

CARBOHYDRATE
Despite protein being so highly valued in weightlifting sports, carbohydrate rich foods shouldn’t be forgotten. They help the absorption of protein into the muscles and should be included in the recovery meal or snack eaten after training. Having sufficient carbohydrate in the meal or snack before training is also important. This prevents protein (muscle) being used to fuel the training session.

Basing meals and snacks on healthy carbohydrate rich foods is ideal. This includes oats, grainy breads and crackers, pasta, rice, noodles and starchy vegetables like potato and kumara.

During and after intense training sessions, additional carbohydrate rich foods and drinks can be helpful to provide extra fuel and help with recovery. Bagels, wraps, cereal bars, creamed rice and sports drinks are some ideas.

FAT
Fat intake should be moderated for lifters who are trying to stay lean. A high fat diet will not help fuel training sessions. It is important however, to include small amounts of healthy fats to keep your body working well. This includes nuts, seeds, oily fish, avocado and vegetable oils.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES
Enjoying plenty of fruit and vegetables is essential to provide vitamins and minerals as well as valuable antioxidants. Including fruit as part of breakfast, as snacks and around training is important for lifters. It is also important to include vegetables at both lunch and dinner. This can be particularly important with high training loads or when losing weight.

Some lifters may strongly limit their choices of foods and follow inflexible meal plans, but these practices are unlikely to be sustainable in the long term. Meal and protein supplements may frequently be used as a portable snack or for recovery, but often these are not cost-effective. As many lifters may not be sponsored, but have to work full-time throughout their training, cost-effective nutrition may become an important consideration.

Well chosen foods can have the same effect as many supplements. Moderation and balance is the key with supplements, as with all foods.
A SAMPLE ONE DAY MEAL PLAN FOR WEIGHTLIFTING

PRE EARLY MORNING TRAINING:
- Low fat yoghurt and banana OR
- Smoothie made with milk, yoghurt and fruit OR
- MILO made with low fat milk

DURING/AFTER MORNING TRAINING:
- Have a bottle of water on hand

BREAKFAST:
- Natural muesli and low fat milk with yoghurt, and a fruit based smoothie OR
- Wholegrain toast with poached eggs, tomato, mushrooms and spinach with a glass of fruit juice

If travelling, pack a combination of fresh fruit, milk drinks, fruit juice cartons, low fat yoghurt, cereal bars and sandwiches

MORNING TEA:
- Dried fruit and raw nuts OR
- Wholegrain crackers with cottage cheese and avocado OR
- Low fat yoghurt and fresh fruit

LUNCH:
- Wholegrain bread rolls or wrap filled with hummus, lean meat/canned fish and salad ingredients OR
- Pasta/rice with tuna and vegetables

Add a piece of fruit and low fat yoghurt to each option

AFTERNOON TEA:
- Low fat yoghurt and fruit OR
- Grainy crackers and cottage cheese or hummus

DURING AFTERNOON TRAINING:
- Have a bottle of water on hand

DINNER:
- Lean meat and vegetable stir-fry with rice or noodles OR
- Spaghetti Bolognese with a side salad OR
- Fish and oven baked chips with salad

SUPPER:
- Hot MILO made with low fat milk OR low fat yoghurt OR low fat custard

NUTRITION PROFILE: CHARLOTTE MOSS

Why do you think nutrition is important for your sport?
A well balanced diet is vital in weightlifting to ensure that your muscle tissue is able to repair quickly after training and competition to make you stronger.

What are some healthy and tasty foods you recommend?
Fruit is my first choice especially berries as they are high in antioxidants and taste great. My favourite is salmon mixed in with udon noodles and grilled cherry tomatoes

KEY FOODS FOR A WEIGHTLIFTER'S FRIDGE/FREEZER
- Lean meat/fish/chicken
- Hummus
- Low fat yoghurt
- Trim milk
- Cottage cheese
- Edam cheese
- Fresh and frozen fruit
- Fresh and frozen vegetables
- Eggs

KEY FOODS FOR A WEIGHTLIFTER'S PANTRY
- Rice, pasta, noodles
- Wholegrain bread
- Crackers
- UNCLE TOBYS Rolled Oats
- MILO Energy Food Drink
- Muesli/Breakfast cereal
- Low fat biscuits
- Pretzels and rice crackers
- Baked beans
- Nuts/Seeds
- Canned fish e.g. tuna/salmon
- CARNATION Light & Creamy Evaporated Milk
- Vegetable oil/spray
- Dried and tinned fruit
- Peanut Butter

NUTRITIONIST'S NOTE
This meal plan is an example only and not intended for individual purposes. This should be altered to suit individual energy requirements depending on age, gender and training load. For those who train at an elite level and/or twice or more a day additional pre training snacks and post training recovery food/drinks will be required. Contact a Sports Dietitian for guidance.
COMPETITION DAY EATING

How competition day is managed often depends on the lifter’s target weight. Frequently, lifters will need to drop weight before the competition to ensure they meet the required weight-class. This process is known as ‘making weight’. Severe dehydration or other rapid weight loss strategies should be avoided on competition day and also the days leading up to competition. They can be dangerous and potentially have a negative impact on performance.

In the days leading up to competition, sufficient time should exist to enable a normal healthy diet to be altered, allowing lifters to lose 0.5-1kg per week if required.

TIPS FOR COMPETITION DAY:

- Practice your food and drink choices for competition day when you are training, to see what works best. Avoid trying new foods before a competition.
- Bring foods from home to competitions to ensure you have suitable options on hand.
- Enjoy a balanced breakfast such as low fat yoghurt/milk with cereal and juice or baked beans, egg and grainy toast. This will help ensure you are adequately fuelled. How much you can manage may depend on your nerves and your weight requirements.
- After weigh-in, focus on fuelling and hydration with sports drinks and foods containing carbohydrate. Keep to low fat foods on competition day as fatty choices may leave you with an upset stomach.
- Fluids should be consumed regularly throughout competition day. Keep a water bottle on hand and take regular sips, particularly after weigh-in.

SPECIAL ISSUES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR WEIGHTLIFTERS:

- Some lifters may have a high reliance on supplement products and ergogenic aids for desired performance benefits.
  - At best, many of these will provide a compact and convenient source of nutrition. But, potentially they can have only a very minimal affect on performance and be very expensive.
  - At worst, they can negatively affect health and performance, or be banned and produce a positive drug test outcome.
- The biggest contributors to performance improvements will be effective training with a balanced diet that is adequate in carbohydrate, protein, vitamins and minerals.

- The timing of these nutrients is important for performance benefits so focussing on foods before and after training is essential.
- If fat loss is a goal, be sure to monitor portion sizes and keep excess fat, alcohol and sugar to a minimum.


KEY COMPETITION FOODS:

- Low fat yoghurt and dairy snacks
- Flavoured milk and MILO
- Protein and sports shakes
- Fruit
- Muesli/cereal bars
- Sandwiches
- Muffins/crumpets/fruit bread
- Rice cakes or low fat crackers and biscuits
- Cordial
- Sports drinks
- Water-based ice-blocks
- Liquid meal supplements
- Rice, pasta or noodles

For more information and to obtain further copies of any of the Eating for Your Sport Nutrition Advice sheets, visit www.nutrition.nestle.co.nz or www.mish.org.nz

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CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE SKEWERS

Serves 4

400g boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 2cm cubes
1 pkt MAGGI Chicken and Mushroom Soup Mix
12 wooden skewers, soaked in water for 1 hour
12 button mushrooms, quartered
24 cherry tomatoes
2 courgettes, sliced

• Toss chicken in MAGGI Chicken and Mushroom Soup Mix. Cover and chill for 20 minutes.
• Heat the flat barbecue plate or preheat grill.
• Thread the chicken pieces onto soaked skewers, alternating with the mushrooms, tomatoes and courgettes.
• Barbecue or grill for 10-15 minutes, turning frequently, until cooked.
• Serve with wholegrain bread, rice, couscous or pasta and extra salad.

ANALYSIS per serve

Energy (kJ) 706
Carbohydrate (g) 9
Protein (g) 26
Fat (g) 3

This recipe is from the Fit Food Fast cookbook. For more recipes visit www.tastyrecipes.co.nz.

By Nutritionist Claire Turnbull - www.claireturnbull.co.nz

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