

News from the Nest

Cutting Weight: The Benefits and the Dangers

by Hayley Serfontein

November 19th, 2025, on a Wednesday. There I stood, in the locker room before practice, stepped on the scale, and watched as the number stared back at me. At that moment, I knew I had to start cutting weight soon.

Athletes often push their bodies to become better at their own sport. Football players stay late to lift. Baseball players work on swing speed. In wrestling, the challenge looks different. Many wrestlers cut weight to compete in lower weight classes, hoping it gives them an advantage on the mat.

For some, that process can be very dangerous. A tally was taken in a Nebraska school and showed that about 72% of the high school wrestlers use at least one harmful weight-loss method each week, including saunas, rubber suits, laxatives, diet pills, or excessive sweating. Cutting weight is not just about food and water, it's about long practices, extra workouts, and mental toughness.

Wrestlers usually face a very hard choice either before the season or right when the season starts. They can compete at their natural weight and feel stronger and healthier, but face opponents who may be bigger or more experienced. Or they can cut weight, push their bodies to the limit, and try to gain an advantage by wrestling lighter competition. Most wrestlers make this decision daily, and it takes a while for them to make their choice.

I am a junior, and I have been wrestling for four years, so weight cuts are nothing new to me. I know exactly what to do and how to do it after many mistakes. As a freshman, I dropped one weight class from my natural weight to 120 pounds and struggled with the adjustment. My sophomore year was even tougher because I cut down to 110 pounds, about 15 pounds below my natural weight, and fought through the season. I won a lot of matches that year, which made my

parents very proud, but it came with a cost because they started to worry about my health. My mom said she just wanted to tell me, "NO MORE!"

My run ended one match short of a state medal with a heartbreaking 1–0 decision loss. But the hardest part wasn't the loss, it was how I felt getting there.

Cutting that much weight that fast took a toll on me. I was dehydrated. Exhausted. I stopped wanting to go places. Everything started to revolve around a number on a scale. My Sophomore year and especially my Freshman year, I felt pressured and felt the need to do those unhealthy habits to cut weight. I didn't know what was safe for my body and how to control my weight the correct way.

That season taught me something very important: a number on the scale can measure weight, but it should not measure the life you are living.

This season, I chose a different approach by wrestling only 10 pounds under my natural weight, which has made a big difference. The cut feels more manageable, and my body has adjusted after years of experience. I am no longer always exhausted, and I feel much stronger. Now it's about learning balance. Paying attention to what I eat, when I eat, and how to fuel my body without gaining too much weight. Measuring water and calories without letting it control the way I live. I now know the correct way to manage my weight and didn't get dragged into the unhealthy habits of cutting weight. Doing this is what helped me have strength and earn a 4th-place medal at state.

Although it is tough most days, I think it is totally worth it, not because of the number on the scale, but because of what I'm learning on the way.

Strength is not a smaller number, strength is feeling strong in the third period, strength is showing up every day, strength is fueling your body, strength is learning from your mistakes, and strength is choosing long-term health over short-term numbers.

For me, cutting weight is more than a number on a scale, it is a test of discipline, sacrifice, and determination. But for me, the biggest lesson is that the scale can tell you a number, but it can't tell your worth and strength.

