

Frequently Asked Questions: A Guide for Parents and Wrestlers

Wrestling Weight Certification Process 2021–2022



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1. Why does MCPS require body fat analyses to determine minimum wrestling weights?

MCPS complies with national federation and state rules regarding weight certification and weight management. MCPS is committed to promoting more responsible, safer, healthier weight management among wrestlers, consistent with the R.A.I.S.E. core value of safe competition.

2. What are the main parts of the weight certification process?

The wrestler's current weight, age, hydration level, and height will be used to calculate what the wrestler would weigh if he achieved a 7% level of body fat (12% for females). The lowest weight class that the wrestler may certify/compete will correspond to what the wrestler would weigh if a 7% level of body fat is achieved (12% for females) while retaining proper hydration.

3. Where does the minimum body fat percent of 7% for males and 12% for females come from?

These are the recommended minimums determined by the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) National Medicine Advisory Committee. Research in sports medicine observed these to be the lower limits among elite athletes performing at peak efficiency. Negative physiological changes have been reported below these levels.

4. Does a wrestler need to reduce to a 7% (12% for females) level of body fat in order to be competitive?

Absolutely not. In fact, the large majority of wrestlers, including the top wrestlers, will compete at weight classes well above that which corresponds to a 7% level of body fat. Remember, 7% is a minimum percentage, not a recommended percentage.

5. Is this a new requirement?

No. MCPS began requiring all wrestlers to undergo body fat analyses in 2003. It is a safer and more precise way to determine a minimum weight class. Since the 2006–07 season, NFHS regulations require all wrestlers in the country to have hydration tests and body fat assessments to determine minimum weight classes.

6. Why is there a need for this process?

National studies have shown excessive weight loss and "bouncing" (rapid weight loss followed by subsequent gorging) among a significant number of wrestlers. Studies show these practices to be harmful. Professional medical organizations and national wrestling organizations strongly endorse the process implemented by MCPS.

7. What potential harmful effects may result from excessive weight loss?

Decreases in academic performance, athletic endurance, and strength have been observed. Also, bodily functions, including internal temperature control mechanisms, may be compromised. An increased incidence and vulnerability to eating disorders is another potential result.

8. How will a safe minimum weight class be determined?

The current height, weight, hydration level, and level of body fat is used to calculate what the wrestler would weigh at a 7% level of body fat (12% for females). The corresponding weight will be used to determine the lowest weight class in which the wrestler may compete.

9. What is to stop wrestlers from crash-dieting and reducing to their minimum weight class in one week?

Every public school team in the state must submit a Team Weight Chart (TWC) prior to the 1st match. This chart is programmed to determine a minimum weight class in which a wrestler may compete for each week of the season. The minimum weight class is programmed to reflect what wrestlers will weigh if they reduced 1.5% of their weight per week, which is considered a safe rate of weight loss.

10. What will MCPS use to measure a wrestler's body fat?

The Tanita TBF-300WA Body Fat Analyzer. This is a reliable, valid instrument that is used to conduct similar tests on wrestlers in many states to determine minimum wrestling weight. The instrument is safe, non-invasive, more precise than calipers, and consistent for all wrestlers.

11. Is the Tanita TBF-300WA safe?

Although there are no known health risks from using the Tanita scale, individuals using a pacemaker or internal electrical medical devices should not use this product. The weak electrical signal may cause such internal devices to malfunction.

12. How does the Tanita TBF-300WA work?

The instrument is similar in appearance to a bathroom scale, with a keypad attached that allows variables to be entered including height, gender, and age. The instrument works on the principle of bioelectric impedance, which involves sending a very small electric signal through the body. When the individual steps on the scale, the feet are in contact with two small pads. The signal begins at one pad, is conducted through the water contained in the body, and ends at the other pad.

Lean muscle has much more water than fat tissue and allows the signal to pass easily. Fat contains significantly less water and causes impedance or resistance to the signal. The amount of time it takes to complete the circuit determines the percent of body fat. The slower the time, the higher the amount of body fat.

13. Who will conduct the tests?

Athletic trainers and professionals will conduct hydration tests and body fat analyses. A Licensed Health Care Provider (LHCP) will be present to certify the minimum weight class for each wrestler, based on the result of the body fat analysis.

14. If body fat is the major criteria for certification, why is a LHCP's signature still required?

The state athletic association, as well as the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), require that a LHCP certify a wrestler's lowest weight class. The Tanita TBF-300WA provides objective data to be used by the LHCP to determine a safe minimum weight class.

15. Why is a hydration test necessary prior to the body fat analysis?

Bio impedance instruments, such as the Tanita TBF-300WA, require that the individual be properly hydrated for a valid, reliable reading. An improper level of hydration will slow the speed of the signal, resulting in a flawed reading. The individual will show to have a higher level of body fat than he or she actually has. All wrestlers must "pass" a Urine Specific Gravity (hydration) test with a reading of 1.025 or lower immediately prior to having their body fat analyses. The urine will be analyzed exclusively for its level of hydration, and immediately discarded.

16. What if a wrestler is not properly hydrated?

If a wrestler is not properly hydrated, the wrestler will have to retake the test at another time.

17. Will what one eats or drinks affect the hydration test?

Certain items including caffeine and chocolate act as diuretics and could result in excess water loss or otherwise impede the electric signal used to measure the percent of one's body fat. Information regarding hydration tips is available.

18. What is required from parents and wrestlers?

Wrestlers must arrive at the designated time/place with a signed parent permission form and student ID. Wrestlers should be properly hydrated, and should wear gym shorts and t-shirts.

19. What is the cost to wrestlers/parents for the body fat analysis/weight certification?

There is no cost to parents for wrestlers who certify at the MCPS sponsored weight certification location. However, parents must bear the expense for appeals or tests conducted at non-MCPS facilities.

20. Do other wrestlers in the state have to undergo a similar weight certification process?

Wrestlers at all Maryland public high schools must have a hydration test, body fat analyses and a LHCP's signature to certify them for a minimum weight class. The weight certification form used by MCPS is similar for all Maryland public schools.

21. What if a wrestler's calculated weight at a 7% level of body fat (12% for females) is between two weight classes?

The higher of the two weight classes will be designated, unless the calculated weight at 7% body fat (12% for females) is within 2% of the lower weight class. The attending LHCP may "round down" to the lower weight class if within 2%. If the attending LHCP does not consider it appropriate to "round down," the wrestler may appeal this decision to his or her family LHCP. The family LHCP may certify the wrestler at the lower weight, but only if the wrestler's projected weight at a 7% level of body fat is within 2% of a lower weight class.

22. Where can I get additional information?

The MCPS Athletics webpage contains specific information regarding many details and aspects of the wrestling certification process. (www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/athletics). This information may also be obtained from the coach.

23. May a wrestler have a private, independent test to establish weight certification, instead of the test that MCPS will administer?

Yes, but the instrument used for the independent test will have to be the Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometer (DEXA Scan), Hydrostatic Weighing, or the same instrument used by MCPS (Tanita TBF-300WA). The individual must bear the costs of independent testing. Independent testing, appeals, and tests/weight certification for wrestlers after the MCPS certification dates are handled through Maryland Orthopedic Specialists (MOS) via email to Randy Rocha (randyrocha.latc@gmail.com). A 2% "rounding" allowance will not be allowed for certification at non-MCPS facilities. A computer-generated test result, including results of the hydration test, must be submitted.

24. Suppose a wrestler misses the MCPS sponsored weight certification or comes out late?

See numbers 23 and 25.

25. Is there an appeals process for an individual who does not agree with the MCPS assessment?

Yes, but the individual must bear whatever costs and make whatever arrangements are necessary. An individual may not appeal whether to allow greater than a 2% allowance that may qualify them for a lower weight class. However, an individual may appeal the results of the MCPS test. Appeals and late certifications are handled through Maryland Orthopedic Specialists (MOS) via email to Randy Rocha (randyrocha.latc@gmail.com). An individual may either be retested using the Tanita TBF-300WA or using a DEXA Scan. There will not be any "allowance" or "rounding down" in an appeal of this nature, and the appeal must be completed and approved before the first match. Appropriate documentation of the test results must be provided.

26. Suppose a wrestler is naturally below the 7% minimum for males or the 12% minimum for females?

First, this is very rare. The wrestler's LHCP must verify in writing that the wrestler is naturally under a 7% level of body fat. There would be no "rounding down". The wrestler would certify for the weight class at or immediately above the natural weight.

27. How may one obtain information on a healthy, nutritious diet for a wrestler?

This information is available on the MCPS Athletics webpage (www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/athletics) and the MPSSAA web site (www.MPSSAA.org). The nutrition plan described is adopted from the California High School Athletic Association nutrition education program for wrestlers.