

Avoiding the Freshman Fifteen

Many students are savvy, and recognize that they earned their larger size by over-indulging at the ice cream bar in the dining hall, too many late night pizzas, using their dining money on giant boxes of M&Ms (and eating 16 servings at once) or eating their way through too many care packages sent from home. Following are some tips to help students get back to a healthier weight.

- **Drink water.** The easiest calories for most students to cut out are the wasted calories on sugary drinks, juices and sodas. Unlimited soda and juice bars in dining halls promote over consumption. The only thing a student should drink like water *is* water. Caffeine may be a part of late night studying for students – diet sodas and low fat milk in coffee are better choices than high calorie alternatives. (*Registered dietitians can take this opportunity to teach students how proper hydration boosts metabolism and prevents fatigue*).
- **The Boy Scout motto.** Be prepared. Stocking a dorm room mini-fridge and makeshift pantry with water, fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts, whole grain crackers, cereals and granola bars will set students up for success. Asking for care packages to be sent with favorite cereals, pre-portioned low calorie snacks, dried fruits and nuts is a great way to keep undergrads on track.
- **Schedule meals.** Plan classes so that there is time for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks, instead of back-to-back classes. Eating every 3 – 5 hours will prevent snacking all day long, skipping meals or grabbing convenience foods – all which may lead to excessive caloric intake.
- **Go green.** Begin each meal with a piece of whole fruit, raw or steamed vegetables or a salad with light dressing. When getting back in line at the dining hall for seconds, students should be educated to revisit the fruits and vegetables, instead of the starches and fats. It is really hard to gain weight from overeating fresh fruits and vegetables, so these foods should be encouraged.
- **Go lean.** Choose lean protein sources of fish, chicken, pork and beef. Good sources of protein are also going to include eggs, legumes, tofu and nuts. Broiled, baked, grilled, steamed and poached foods are the most healthful. Avoid sauces, gravies and marinades as much as possible.
- **Sleep and exercise.** These essentials are not negotiable. Sleep is required for a well-oiled metabolism. Exercise is vital to maintaining a healthful weight.
- **No food in the library.** Keep snacking and studying separate. Use study breaks as a time to have something to eat. Choose single portion or pre-portioned snacks that contain carbohydrate with a little fat and or protein.
- **Portion patrol.** Patrol your tray to make a sure your plate looks like what would normally be given in a TV dinner, on an airplane or in a high school cafeteria 'hot lunch' line. Choose only one "new" food to try at a given meal (it will be served again) and fill the rest of the tray with familiar foods, fruits and vegetables. Don't put desserts on your tray, or you will eat it. If you really want a sweet after a meal, make a special trip to get it. When the meal is over, leave the dining hall!
- **Hungry?** Before each meal, check in with yourself to see if you are really hungry. If you are eating for a reason other than hunger, see if a glass of water, conversation with a friend or short walk will fulfill the need.

Reference

Selkowitz-Litt A. The College Student's Guide to Eating Well on Campus. Bethesda: Tulip Hill Press, 2000.