

The Freshman 15 – *Would you like fries with that?*

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Late-pizza runs, skipping meals due to busy schedules, weekend partying, and stress eating all contribute to the excess weight packed on by many first year students. Studies have shown that students gain 3 to 10 pounds on average during their first 2 years of university. What is it that triggers overeating? As students, we often eat in response to feelings of anxiety, homesickness, sadness and stress, all of which are a part of adapting to pressures in our new environment.

Many temptations arise in first year at university – you're on your own, so you can eat what you want, when you want it! Dinners of French fries and ice cream along with late-night study sessions fuelled by snacks packed with sugar and salt are not uncommon. We need to consider that if we develop poor diet and exercise patterns in university, we may put ourselves on the path towards heart disease, type 2 Diabetes, and obesity.

So how can you avoid the dreaded Freshman 15?

- ❖ Choose a mixture of nutritious foods recommended from Canada's Food Guide <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment>
- ❖ Watch your portion and serving sizes www.eatrightontario.ca Search: portion sizes
- ❖ Eat slowly, and at regular intervals during the day
- ❖ Avoid vending machines and fast food
- ❖ Choose low-fat foods & drink plenty of water.

Eat Healthy Snacks – Try trail mix, fresh fruit, almonds, unbuttered popcorn, string cheese, whole grain crackers with peanut butter, raw veggies like carrots, or bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, dried fruit like apricots, apple rings and raisins, pretzels

Shop Smart – Create a weekly meal plan and shopping list before going to the grocery store. Get your friends/roommates involved! Spend time in the produce, bread, milk and meat sections of the store. It's okay to pick up a bag of chips, just make it every other trip!

Read Food Labels – Using the Nutrition Facts table will help you select nutritious foods with less saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and sodium, and also help you compare the health benefits between products.

Keep An Eye On Your Alcohol Consumption – Beer, wine and liquor are high in calories and have no nutritional value. Also, drinking alcohol often changes people's behaviour when it comes to eating – consuming more high caloric foods, like chips, pizza and fries. So, if you are going to drink, do it in moderation.

Have A Side Order of Exercise - A healthy diet with an addition of physical activity will help you to keep the weight off. At our David Braley Athletic Centre, numerous classes such as yoga, aerobics, and Pilates are offered along with squash courts, a swimming pool, and an indoor track. Simply walking to campus and between classes is an easy way to stay fit.

Reaping the Benefits

The benefits you gain by developing and maintaining great eating habits are numerous:

- ✓ More energy for studying, socializing, athletics
- ✓ Better sleep...zZz!
- ✓ A stronger immune system – to avoid residence colds and coughs!
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy weight
- ✓ Eating habits that will keep you healthy well into adulthood.

With these tips, the Freshman 15 will be nothing more than a myth.

References: www.eatrightontario.ca; <http://kidshealth.org>

Want to choose healthy eating?

- Focus on fruits and vegetables – choose some that are dark green and orange every day - the most vitamin and anti-oxidant rich.
- Go for grain products. Make at least ½ your grain products each day ‘whole grain’. Note: whole grain is different than whole wheat. It means the 3 nutrient and fibre rich layers of the grain have been left intact. E.g. whole grain cold cereals or breads for breakfast; a hot bowl of oatmeal; brown rice, instead of white when having a stir-fry.
- Select milk products/alternatives that are lower in fat. Those with added vitamin D are important when your bones are still growing during your late teens and twenties. E.g. lower fat yogurt mixed with fruit and whole grain cereal for breakfast; a skinny latte for your afternoon pick-me-up; and chocolate milk or soy beverage for dessert.
- Make the most of meat and alternatives. Even if you are not a vegetarian – try eating beans, lentils and tofu more often. These are excellent and inexpensive sources of protein. To get your heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, challenge yourself to eat at least 2 servings of fish – such as salmon, or canned tuna, every week. Nuts and seeds are also good choices. Avoid deep fried foods and high sodium deli meats.
- Choose water, milk and 100% fruit or vegetables juice when you are thirsty.

Healthy Fast Food Choices – at the Food Court

- ✓ Enjoy your hamburgers and French fries once in a while, but remember to make healthier choices most of the time. (Eat 80% healthy/20 % indulge yourself)
- ✓ Have the burger or the grilled chicken sandwich – but skip the fries.
- ✓ Want pizza? Instead of extra cheese and pepporoni, have a slice loaded with veggies and grilled chicken. Try the whole grain crust.
- ✓ Go to the sandwich deli – and fill up on your fibre. Choose whole grain or whole wheat bread, as many veggies as you can, and lean meats like turkey and chicken.
- ✓ At the coffee shop – order the small or regular sized coffee, cappuccino or iced latte. Ask for your drink to be made with low fat or skim mild or soy beverage. Skip the whipped topping.
- ✓ Interested in Asian food? Good choices include steamed dumpling, steamed buns and veggies. Cold salad rolls, sushi and soups. Try to avoid deep fried veggies, noodles and spring rolls.

Eating well is easy with the following resources:

EatRight Ontario: www.eatrightontario.ca

Ask a Dietitian – 120 languages. M-F 9a.m.-5p.m. Tues & Thurs, evening hrs until 9pm.
Call toll-free 1-877-510-5102 or email dietitian thru website address.

Hamilton Public Health: Speak to a registered dietitian or physical activity specialist. Call the Nutrition and Physical Activity Advice Line 905 546-3630 M-F 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

Dietitians of Canada (<http://www.dietitians.ca>) Click on Eat Well, Live Well

Check out:

- EATracker – assessing your daily food and activity choices
- Recipe Analyzer – discover the nutrients in your favourite recipes
- Virtual Grocery Store – how to read nutrition labels