Educating Students on the Dangers of Weight Gain: Can It Help?

What’s the big deal?

It is important to understand that college students deal with many obstacles when it comes to weight management. Young adults attending college are more vulnerable to weight gain than the general population. This weight gain can be attributed to many things including:

- Change in food environment
- Greater variety and choice in food selection
- No parental influence on diet
- Different social aspects of eating

What is the “Freshmen 15”?

The “Freshmen 15” is the belief that college students will gain up to 15 pounds during their first year of college. Most studies have shown that the weight rarely reaches 15 pounds.

How can I avoid weight gain?

The best way to avoid gaining weight during your first year of school is to prevent it altogether. Adopting good habits at an early time makes it easier to avoid the unnecessary pounds later on in life. Adopting balanced habits such as a healthy diet, proper amount of physical activity, and getting enough sleep can help with weight management.

What do I do if I gain weight?

Contrary to popular belief, gaining a few pounds is never the end of the world. Weight fluctuation is natural. Whatever you do, do not try a fad diet or stop eating; neither will end up working in the long run.

Many students attribute weight gain to eating while stressed. There is an easy fix to that, try to keep healthy snacks around your house or in your backpack.

Help Yourself Out!

- Avoid eating when stressed
- Watch portion size
- Eat slowly
- Keep healthy snacks
- Find a buddy to work out with

How can I eat healthy at college?

Many students complain that eating a healthy diet while at college is difficult. One reason for this difficulty is that the social aspect of eating with friends has changed from eating with their parents. Students find it difficult to eat healthy when none of their friends are. It might be hard, but when your friends grab a hamburger try and eat a chicken sandwich instead. Substituting chicken for beef is always a good place to start when changing your eating habits.
Having a balanced diet of fruits and vegetables is one of the most important aspects of weight management. Mypyramid.gov gives step by step directions on how to guide the amount and the type of food you should intake on a daily basis.

A balanced diet of fruits and vegetables is a great way to help manage weight.

What is a balanced diet?

A balanced diet includes eating at least three ounces of whole grain bread, cereal, or pasta every day. Also, make sure “whole” is always before bread when you are looking at the grocery store. When it comes to vegetables, the darker they are they better they are for you. Make sure to eat a variety of fruit and, contrary to popular belief, canned fruits do count as fruit. Drink eight ounces of milk daily and try to drink non-fat or 2% milk. Always choose low-fat or lean poultry or fish when trying to decide on your meats.

Do not forget that a balanced diet always includes physical activity. Remember to stay active and try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes per day. It will help keep your weight down and tone your muscles as well.

Another way to look at keeping a healthy weight is balancing your energy. If your caloric intake in the food and drinks you consume (energy in) is greater than the calories you burn (energy out) you are probably going to gain weight.

If your caloric intake in the food and drinks you consume (energy in) is less than the calories you burn (energy out) you will probably lose weight.

Keeping yourself informed on your caloric intake is a great way to help manage your weight.

What about the physical activity?

Being in college is a great place to be when it comes to getting more active. There are many ways to get at least 30 minutes of cardio activity in a day.

- Walking to class
- Joining an intramural team
- Get involved at your student recreational center
- Ride a bike instead of driving to school

All of these are easy ways to burn a few extra calories and help manage weight. Finding a friend to go to the gym with you is a great way to also get an accountability partner to help keep you on track. Being active is important factor in every stage of life and starting these habits during your college life is just going to make it that much easier for you when you are older.

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References


