



FIGHTING **the** FRESHMAN

15

> by Lori Mortimer

I'm sure you've heard the warnings—it's been happening on American campuses for decades: You'll put on 5 pounds by fall midterms ... 10 pounds after the winter break ... and by May, you'll sport the dreaded "Freshman 15."

In the past, cafeteria menus high in fat, salt, and calories took the blame for freshman year weight gain. But campus menus are more nutritious than ever before, and the pounds keep piling up anyway. Alcohol, especially binge beer drinking, surely contributes. But freshmen who don't drink also put on weight. So, why won't the Freshman 15 just drop out?

When It Comes to Food, Bigger Is Not Better

One answer is pretty simple, says Elizabeth Goodrow, Clinical Nutrition Coordinator at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

When students arrive on campus, "They are regulating what they eat for the first time," Goodrow says. And unfortunately, "at most schools, it's an all-you-can-eat buffet," where the food is plentiful and within your reach, tempting you to grab everything you like.

"The biggest problem for college students is that they don't know how to portion a meal," Goodrow says. Her advice?

Keep it simple: take a single protein serving (chicken, shrimp, turkey, egg salad, beef, chick peas, tofu, baked beans), a vegetable serving (broccoli, carrots, spinach, squash, green beans), and a starch (rice or potato) serving. Add a small green salad and a low-calorie, low-fat drink, such as 1% milk or water, and you have a healthy meal.

Another tip: walk through the food service area and scan the choices before getting a tray. Or check the daily menu on your school's Web site. Plan which items you want and then go get them. And if you can, resist impulse items as you walk to the register.



The Sophomore–Senior Slump

Unfortunately, weight gain doesn't always stop after freshman year. Many

College-aged women need between **1,800** and **2,400** calories per day.

upperclassmen continue adding pounds, according to Thomas Wilson, PhD, Assistant

Professor, Department of Clinical Laboratory and Nutritional Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He suspects that freshmen develop poor eating and exercise habits that stay with them throughout college.

To maintain a healthy diet for four years, consider the following tips.

> KNOW HOW MUCH YOU NEED

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) publishes nutritional guidelines based on a 2,000-calorie daily diet (www.mypyramid.gov).

College-aged men need between **2,400** and **3,200** calories per day.

Your age and activity level determine your recommended calorie intake. College-aged

women need between 1,800 and 2,400 calories per day. College-aged men need 2,400 to 3,200 calories. (See “Calorie Intake,” right)

When you know your recommended calorie intake, you can plan what to eat. At the dining hall, look for nutritional labels next to entrees and food choices. Many schools now display serving size and nutritional values so you can make informed food choices each day.

> STAY ACTIVE

As the school year progresses, students usually abandon exercise to make time for school, work, and, yes, a social life, Goodrow says.

To stay active, “Write out a daily schedule for the semester and make exercise a part of every day,” Goodrow recommends. Then stick to the schedule, even during crunch time. Find simple ways to exercise, too: take the stairs instead of the elevator, bike or walk to class instead of driving or taking the bus, and when you do drive, “try not to fight for that close parking spot,” Goodrow says.

> MONITOR YOUR METABOLISM

Busy students sometimes skip meals, and so do crash dieters. “When spring break comes, students go on starvation diets to get ready for bathing suit weather,” Goodrow says. But missed meals slow your metabolism. That means you burn calories less efficiently, which helps you gain weight.

Goodrow recommends that you eat five small, healthy meals a day to maintain your metabolism and to prevent overeating at mealtime. You need breakfast, lunch, and dinner, plus two healthy snacks a day to keep your metabolism burning at a good rate. (See “Sample Menu” on page 16.)



> CREATE COLORFUL SALADS

Start with a base of greens—lettuce, spinach, arugula, and kale—and then add colorful veggies and other toppings: carrots; tomatoes; red cabbage; radishes; corn; peas; mushrooms; chickpeas; cottage cheese; red, yellow, and green peppers; and even grilled chicken.

Beware of the hidden calories, salt, and fat at salad bars, though. They’re in cheese, croutons, bacon bits, sugar beets, and pasta salads made with mayonnaise. Choose a vinegar and oil dressing over a creamy one, and take it on the side. If you mix your salad well, you need only a teaspoon of dressing.

CALORIE INTAKE

[by Age and Activity Level]

The USDA assigns individuals to a calorie level based on their sex, age, and activity level. The chart below identifies the calorie levels for males and females by age and activity level.



GIRLS

AGE	ACTIVITY LEVEL		
	Sedentary	Mod. Active	Active
18	1,800	2,000	2,400
19–20	2,000	2,200	2,400
21–25	2,000	2,200	2,400



GUYS

AGE	ACTIVITY LEVEL		
	Sedentary	Mod. Active	Active
18	2,400	2,800	3,200
19–20	2,600	2,800	3,000
21–25	2,400	2,800	3,000

SEDENTARY = less than 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

MOD. ACTIVE = at least 30 minutes up to 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

ACTIVE = 60 minutes or more a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

> SELECT SMART SUBSTITUTIONS

Changing your eating habits in small ways can make a big difference in your calorie and fat intake. For example, put 1% milk in your coffee instead of cream or half-and-half. Or choose baked potato chips instead of the regular kind, which are high in fat. (See “Smart Food Substitutes” on page 17.)

In general, look for low-fat or fat-free food varieties, reduced-salt or “no-salt-added” options, and opportunities to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



> MANAGE THE MUNCHIES

Everyone blames the late-night munchies for weight gain. But eating at night won't

hurt you—total daily calorie intake matters most, not what time of day you get those calories.

Students eat poorly at night because they have few choices. What's open at 1:00 a.m.? Fast-food joints, diners, pizza places ... and vending machines. As a result, most students eat too many carbohydrates and fats, especially late at night.

If you eat out, make the best of limited choices. Add peppers, mushrooms, and other vegetables to pizza. Order the grilled-chicken sandwich or a salad at a fast-food restaurant. And skip the french fries because they're

SAMPLE MENU

Here's a USDA-recommended menu for a single day for those on a 2,000-calorie nutrition plan.

BREAKFAST

- 1/2 CUP COOKED OATMEAL WITH 2 TBSP. RAISINS AND 1 TSP. SOFT MARGARINE
- 1/2 CUP FAT-FREE MILK
- 1 CUP ORANGE JUICE

SNACK

- 1/4 CUP PINEAPPLE
- 2 TBSP. RAISINS

LUNCH

- TACO SALAD WITH 1/2 CUP LETTUCE, 2 OUNCES GROUND TURKEY, 1/2 CUP BLACK BEANS, AND 1 OUNCE LOW-FAT CHEDDAR CHEESE
- 1 UNSWEETENED BEVERAGE

SNACK

- 1/2 OUNCE DRY-ROASTED ALMONDS

DINNER

- SPINACH LASAGNA MADE WITH 1 CUP LASAGNA NOODLES (2 OZ. DRY), 2/3 CUP COOKED SPINACH, 1/2 CUP RICOTTA CHEESE, 1/2 CUP TOMATO SAUCE, 1 OUNCE PART-SKIM MOZZARELLA CHEESE
- 1 OUNCE WHOLE WHEAT DINNER ROLL
- 1 CUP FAT-FREE MILK

SOURCE
U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Sample Menus for a 2000-Calorie Food Pattern, 2005*

drenched with oil and salt. Heading to a diner? Choose eggs and whole grain toast instead of waffles or pancakes, and say no thanks to the sausage and bacon.

You should also keep only healthy snacks in your dorm room or apartment, such as:

- > Nuts
- > Whole wheat granola bars
- > Dried fruit
- > Rice cakes
- > Wheat crackers
- > 100% fruit juice
- > Rice cakes
- > Fresh or canned fruit
- > Trail mix
- > Yogurt
- > Water
- > Plain popcorn



Eating Well for Life

It can be challenging to both eat well and stay active while you're in college. But if you know how many calories you need, and you plan your meals and snacks carefully, you can avoid the Freshman 15 while developing good eating habits for the future.

SMART FOOD SUBSTITUTES

Instead of	Try
REGULAR POTATO CHIPS OR TORTILLA CHIPS	BAKED POTATO CHIPS OR TORTILLA CHIPS
FRIED CHICKEN 	GRILLED, BROILED, OR BAKED CHICKEN 
SODA OR JUICE	WATER, FLAVORED WATERS, SELTZER
BAGEL WITH BUTTER	ENGLISH MUFFIN WITH JAM
COFFEE WITH CREAM OR HALF-AND-HALF	COFFEE WITH 1% MILK
ICE CREAM	FROZEN YOGURT 
WHOLE MILK 	SKIM OR 1% MILK
CREAM SAUCES	MEATLESS TOMATO SAUCES
RICOTTA CHEESE	NONFAT COTTAGE CHEESE
MAYONNAISE (ON A SANDWICH)	MUSTARD 
BROWNIES OR CAKE	ANGEL FOOD CAKE
COOKIES 	ANIMAL CRACKERS, FIG BARS
FRENCH FRIES	BAKED OR MASHED POTATOES 