



NutritionWise

NICOLE MEADOW, MPN, RD

A COLLEGE TRADITION IN NEED OF A MAKEOVER

SEPTEMBER 2007

A study by Cornell University revealed that college freshman gain an average of 0.5 pounds per week. This equates to even more than the “Freshman 15”! Why are college freshman gaining weight at such a rapid rate and how can this timeless tradition be broken?

There is usually a marked increase in caloric intake during the first year away at college. Unlimited amounts of food at the cafeteria, fast food, vending machines, soda and high calorie coffee drinks are just the beginning of the high calorie foods that freshman consume (and usually did not consume the year prior). College is a time of change, and the stress associated with these changes can lead to overeating. College students often have poor dietary habits that can impede their metabolism and lead to excess weight gain (skipping breakfast; eating only one very large meal and a few high calorie, high sugar snacks; and the late night snack attack can accumulate huge amounts of calories) In addition, exercise levels often decrease significantly during the first year away at college.

Why should you be concerned about this weight gain? Rapid weight gain caused by poor dietary and exercise habits in college can start teenagers on a path that can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and may increase risk for certain cancers (all associated with obesity).

The big question is, how can you avoid gaining the “Freshman 15” or even more? Try the following strategies:

- » Pack your dorm room refrigerator with healthful snacks (fruit, lowfat yogurt, string cheese) and have cereal, nuts and dried fruit on hand to pack snacks for the day and for study breaks.
- » Make it a rule to have time for eating and time for other activities. Avoid eating when watching TV, studying, or when stressed.
- » Slow down at meals. Put your fork (or sandwich) down between bites. Enjoy your food.
- » Eat 3 meals per day (and 1-2 healthful snacks). Avoid having seconds at all you can eat cafeterias just because it is there. Listen to your body and stop when you are full!
- » Limit empty calorie beverages (soda, lemonade) and drink water instead.
- » Make it your personal goal to stay healthy and to not follow this age old tradition!
- » Be active at least 3-4 times per week (join an exercise program, work out in the dorm gym or have an “exercise buddy” whom you walk or run with).

Lastly, don't freak out if you notice that you have started to gain a few pounds. Look at your intake and activity habits. Try to make small changes (an extra 125 calories per day can equal one pound weight gain per month). Start with small changes and take it day by day. You can do it!

GET MORE AT WWW.NICOLEMEADOW.COM

You can now get more information online! Visit my new website www.nicolemeadow.com and get more information on nutrition for you and your family.

Nicole Meadow, MPN, RD | Registered Dietitian | (818) 304.1876 | info@nicolemeadow.com