

KID'S Corner



STAYING HEALTHY DURING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE: WITH FREEDOM COMES RESPONSIBILITY

STARTING COLLEGE CAN EVOKE MANY EMOTIONS, BUT ONE OF THE MOST COMMON IS FREEDOM! WHILE FREEDOM CAN BE EXCITING, IT ALSO COMES WITH RESPONSIBILITY.

by Lea Crosetti Andes, RD, CSSD

The first major and most fundamental responsibility is our health. Eating well and being physically active is key to overall health and wellbeing. However, it may not always make it to the priority list contributing to unhealthy habits and potential weight gain during the first year of school. Despite the phrase “freshmen 15,” college freshmen tend to gain about 3-10 pounds within the first year on average. There are several factors that contribute to this. This article discusses five problematic areas and provides a roadmap to healthfully navigate through them to live happy and healthy during your first year of freedom/responsibility.

1. DORM LIVING

Dorm rooms are typically small shared spaces with limited appliances. Oftentimes, there may be room for a mini refrigerator and microwave. Because of this, convenience foods like chips, cookies, Top Ramen, Hot Pockets and Mac N Cheese tend to be staples in many dorm rooms. These fast and easy foods are typically highly processed and calorie dense while lacking in important vitamins and minerals. It is always better to have healthy options at “home” and go out for the less healthy options because it will likely be eating just because it is there and easily accessible. Storing healthier options in the refrigerator like hummus and veggies, natural peanut butter, yogurt and fruit can help assure there are healthy options nearby.

2. CAFETERIA BUFFET

A Cornell study showed that 20 percent of college weight gain was due to the all-you-can-eat cafeteria buffets. It is

easy to get carried away with the plethora of food in many cafeterias. The idea of being able to eat anything you want can leave freshmen newbies at risk for loading their plates with lots of high calorie foods. In addition, vegetables are likely to be skimmed on since mom is not there to make sure you are eating them. And let’s not forget the loaded dessert bar or self-serve ice cream with toppings that many cafeterias also have. These wonderful and tasty treats can easily become a freshmen’s daily routine, which can pack on even more empty calories. Some tips for navigating the cafeteria are always make sure 1/2 of your plate is vegetables and limit the desserts and ice cream to a couple of times a week.

3. SOCIAL LIFE

Several studies have shown that the major contributor to weight gain in the college years is alcohol consumption. Although freshmen are not legally old enough to drink alcohol and should refrain from consuming it, many local parties tend to have it and that new sense of “freedom” (or rebellion) can kick in. Not only is alcohol extremely calorie

dense, it is also considered to be empty calories because it provides no nutritional value at all. Another concern often seen with an increase in alcohol consumption is poor food choices. In fact, there is a direct relationship between alcohol and “junk” food: the more people drink, the more they tend to choose high fat/calorie foods. In addition, alcohol impairs vitamin and mineral metabolism and can contribute to deficiencies when alcohol is consumed in large quantities and/or throughout time.

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4. EXERCISE

With an increasing social life and the need to study and pass courses, exercise can often be neglected. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, exercise helps to relieve stress and can lead to better grades. Numerous studies have shown that exercising increases blood flow and nutrients to the brain, increases the number of brain cells and balances neurotransmitters. This can improve the connection between the brain cells. Exercise can be a fantastic outlet to relieve stress and improve mental focus to better complete the task at hand. The goal is to be physically active every day. Take breaks between study sessions to stay alert and improve blood flow to the brain. If you are studying for hours, take 10 minutes every hour to walk and move around. Investing those 10 minutes can actually allow your brain to retain more than if you studied straight through. And if you are worried that exercise may cut into your social time, look for group classes you can take with friends. There are many boot camps and gyms around campuses that can be a great way to stay healthy and meet other active people.

5. MEAL PATTERNS

Living under your parent's roof gives you some structure, but with this new "freedom" of living in a dorm and taking care of yourself, you "call the shots." And because of this, meal patterns often change. Whether you are up late studying or out late socializing, you may find yourself consuming a 4th meal. And usually the only food options available after midnight are fast food restaurants or other types of "junk" food delivery. This can easily be an extra 500-1,000 cal added to the day....that's 1-2 pounds of extra weight a week if you did that every night. Without mom there telling you to "eat breakfast," you may be inclined to skip that meal while rushing to class and wait until lunch to eat. However, numerous studies have shown that eating breakfast can help regulate weight. And oftentimes when people skip breakfast, they will likely overeat later in the day and/or evening. Another common issue with meal pattern is grazing while studying and stress eating or stress eating from the pressure of exams and maintaining a good GPA. You can definitely have a snack, but I would recommend taking a break and eating. Eating while studying can interfere with you listening to your fullness signals, which can lead to you eating more than you really need. Never bring a bag or a box of "snacky foods" to the desk to study; you could likely consume 1/2 to the full package without even realizing you did.



CONCLUSION

There really is nothing like the first year of college. You are truly a young adult and can take care of yourself. Establishing new life-long habits can start here. Don't be afraid to ask mom for some healthy tips and recipes (moms love to help with this). Enjoy this time, and at the same time, take care of your body (it's the only place you have to live).

About the Author:

Lea Crosetti Andes, RD, CSSD, is a registered dietitian and board certified specialist in sports dietetics. With a strong background in both sports and bariatric nutrition, Lea coined the term and founded BariAthletes®. Her mission is to not only help bariatric athletes meet their specific nutritional needs, but also help them embrace their inner athlete.

Platinum

Covidien
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American Society for Metabolic
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Potomac Currents

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Arena Pharmaceuticals
American Society of Bariatric Physicians
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List as of 10/17/14

OAC Membership Application

Why Join the OAC? Because it's the **ONLY** National non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping individuals affected by obesity. The OAC needs every individual who is concerned about the cause of obesity to join our Coalition. With your voice, we can make a difference in education and advocacy for the millions of individuals affected by obesity.



BUILDING A COALITION OF THOSE AFFECTED

The OAC is the **ONLY** non-profit organization whose sole focus is helping those affected by obesity. The OAC is a great place to turn if you are looking for a way to get involved and give back to the cause of obesity.

Why YOU Should Become an OAC Member

Quite simply, because the voice of those affected needs to be built! The OAC not only provides valuable public education on obesity, but we also conduct a variety of advocacy efforts. With advocacy, our voice must be strong. And, member is what gives the OAC its strong voice.

BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP



- Official welcome letter and membership card
- Annual subscription to the OAC's publication, *Your Weight Matters*SM Magazine
- Subscriptions to the OAC Members Make a Difference and Obesity Action Alert monthly e-newsletters
- "Bias Buster" Alerts, alerting specifically to issues of weight bias
- Immediate Advocacy Alerts on urgent advocacy issues and access to the OAC's expert advocacy team
- Ability to lend your voice to the cause

OAC Membership Categories *(select one)*

- Individual Membership: \$20/year
- Institutional Membership: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council Membership: \$1000+/year

Are you joining for the first time, or are you renewing your OAC Membership?

- I am joining for the first time *(never been an OAC member)*.
- I am renewing my membership *(have joined the OAC in the past)*.

OAC Membership Add-ons

(optional, but only accessible by OAC members)

Add-on 1: Educational Resources

To order bulk copies of OAC resources, members can purchase educational packages (not required for *Institutional* and *Chairman's Council* Members).

- Standard Package**
10-50 pieces/quarter \$50
- Deluxe Package**
51-100 pieces/quarter \$100
- Premium Package**
101-250 pieces/quarter \$150

Add-on 2: Make a General Donation

Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC. Your donation helps the OAC's educational and advocacy efforts.

- \$5 \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other _____

Membership/Add-on Totals:

Membership Category: \$ _____
Add-on 1 *(if applicable)*: +\$ _____
Add-on 2 *(if applicable)*: +\$ _____
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT: \$ _____

Contact Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Information

- Check (payable to the OAC) for \$ _____.
- Credit card for my TOTAL membership, fee including add-ons, of \$ _____.
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Credit Card Number: _____
Expiration Date: _____ CCV: _____

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