

# Foster Care to Good Health

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## Eating Right

**Being a college student is stressful business. There are never enough hours in the day for the papers you need to write, the books you need to read and the research you need to do, not to mention your job and all the friends you want to see, places you want to visit and things you want to do. There never seems to be enough money in your pocket either! It's enough to give you a headache, or worse.**

Your best defense in handling the stress of your daily life is to stay healthy. Staying healthy involves three supposedly simple things:

1. Eat properly
2. Study – work – relax – exercise – sleep – in reasonable proportion to each other
3. Keep an eye on your health; never ignore worrisome symptoms and see a doctor when you need to

“Supposedly.” Ha! It is not always easy to eat wisely and find the time to sleep when you have three term papers due on the same day and your boss just asked you to come to work because a colleague called in sick. We have compiled a few simple suggestions on how to eat well in a stressful, penny-pinching lifestyle and how to manage your time to fit in the things that are important to you as well as those that are important to school and work. Hopefully, following these guidelines, you will remain healthy and won't have to visit the doctor very often.

## Eating Right

You learned about nutrition in elementary school; the food pyramid, healthy snacks – and for goodness sakes finish your vegetables because somewhere in the world people are starving. Eating well gives you the energy to tackle your daily activities with enthusiasm. Along with exercise, it makes your skin glow and your hair shine. If you don't eat well your body will quickly let you know, like with that sick feeling you get when all you've eaten nothing all day but candy bars, cookies and sodas. The infamous “Freshman 15” (the 15 pounds some college freshmen put on between August and Christmas break) can be another indication that you have been eating too much pizza and potato chips and not enough soup and salad!

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It might seem like a challenge to follow a healthy diet as a busy college student, but even on a school meal plan or using a microwave oven in your dorm room, you can choose your foods wisely and enjoy them.

### *Here are some easy healthy eating tips:*

- **Always eat breakfast.** A whole-wheat bagel (whole wheat and whole grain foods are healthier than those made with white flour, and because they contain more fiber you feel full longer), a piece of fruit or even oatmeal fresh from the microwave are all simple to prepare and easy to store in the tiniest dorm room kitchen. If you have a good breakfast you are less likely to snack on a chocolate bar in the middle of the morning. Studies show that students who have eaten breakfast do better on tests than those who have not. If you don't have time to sit down, a breakfast bar and bottle of orange juice while walking to class are MUCH better than nothing.
- **Carry a water bottle with you wherever you go.** This will ensure that you remain well-hydrated while saving money and staying fit. A café-style coffee drink can cost \$3.50 or more and add 300 calories to your waistline, and a super-sized cola contains nearly 600 calories. Both contain caffeine, which can cause jitteriness, increased heart rate and sleepless nights. Water is free (or can be!) and has zero calories and no caffeine.
- **Grab a piece of fruit or a hard roll** every time you leave the dining hall, and snack on it when you are hungry later. Keep healthy snacks on hand in your dorm room and your backpack – fresh or dried fruit, pretzels, unbuttered popcorn, rice cakes and whole-wheat crackers are all good choices. Don't keep high calorie sweet foods such as ice cream or chocolate in your dorm room!
- **Choose wisely in the dining hall, cafeteria or restaurant** – have pizza with half the cheese, a regular-sized sandwich and a baked potato rather than fries, or a good salad with reduced-calorie dressing. But be careful with the salad – if you choose bacon bits, six spoonfuls of mayonnaise-dressing, cheese, nuts and macaroni, it may end up with more calories than a sandwich and fries combined. Use a salad plate instead of a dinner plate – it fills up faster! In a restaurant, you can always ask to have some of your food put in a doggy bag for later. One Chinese restaurant dinner can often last another meal or even two at home.
- **Avoid fad diets.** If you are going to change your diet radically in college, such as becoming a vegetarian or cutting out all carbohydrates, do some research and be reasonable about it. Don't just stop eating meat, for example, and go on a pasta only diet – you need fruits and vegetables in order to remain healthy.
- **Finally, remember that food is meant to be enjoyed.** Have a picnic outside, sit with your friends, read a novel, or just relax for a few minutes while you eat something that tastes good. Soothe your spirit while you feed your body.

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The federal government has an excellent website, [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov), which gives tips on healthy eating. Take, for example, the simple suggestions below. True, they're not that much different from what we already said, but it is really cool that each bullet is a link to further information (not here, duh, but on the website – check it out!):

- Make half your grains whole
- Vary your veggies
- Focus on fruits
- Get your calcium rich foods
- Go lean with protein
- Find your balance between food and physical activity

If you follow these guidelines – or at least remember them if you don't ALWAYS follow them – along with a few common sense rules you already know such as push your plate away when you are full, green vegetables are GOOD for you, and a Margarita is not a meal – you will avoid those “Freshman 15” and have the energy you need to get you through the day without sagging.

And if you started college heavier than you would like to be these same sensible eating habits should help you lose those extra pounds, especially in conjunction with moderate exercise such as walking or biking to the library instead of taking your car.