Student Success Tools

Staying Well in College

1. Eat Right

Eating a healthy diet can help boost students' immune systems, help students to maintain a healthy weight and can improve their overall health. Sometimes it may seem difficult to eat healthy in college when your meal choices consist of the cafeteria or fast food restaurants, but there are easy ways to make adjustments in your eating habits. First, always eat breakfast. This may be difficult when you're rushing out the door to get to that 8 a.m. classes, but grabbing a granola bar or banana goes a long way in keeping you from overeating throughout the day. Also, never skip meals. Again, the typical day of a college students is usually nothing but typical, but you always have time to grab a healthy salad or sandwich from the dining hall. For those late-night cravings during all-nighters, try healthier alternatives to your favorite late-night foods. For example, get pizza with whole wheat crust, vegetable toppings instead of meat and low-fat cheese. Snacking can also be a great way to keep your appetite in check throughout the day. Snacking can stop "mindless eaters" and those who eat for comfort. Keep things like pre-cut vegetables and fruit, nuts, pita bread or string cheese on hand so you aren't tempted to buy unhealthy snacks. If nothing else, keep these three things in mind when choosing foods: moderation, variety and balance. Try keeping a good balance of dairy, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and protein every day.

2. Exercise

Fitting exercise into a busy college schedule can be difficult, but most college campuses make it easy for students to get exercise. One of the easiest ways to get exercise is to walk to class. Depending on your class schedule, this could add anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour of exercise every day. Most colleges offer physical fitness classes and intramural sports programs, so take advantage of these for a fun way to get exercise.

3. Get enough sleep

Though you may be tempted to pull an all-nighter to study for an exam or stay out until 3 a.m. partying with friends, make sure you don't make that a habit. Sleep deprivation can lead to reduced brain function, fatigue, headaches and weight loss or gain. College students need between six and nine hours of sleep and getting this amount can improve overall health. To stay rested throughout the day, try taking a short nap during the day, try to stick to a schedule, try to keep your room dark and quiet before bedtime and avoid drinking caffeine, eating and drinking right before bed.

4. Wash your hands

With flu season just around the corner, washing your hands can be a savior for college students who can't afford to miss class because of the flu. College students are always in close contact with others: through classes, living situations with roommates, walking around campus, and it is very easy to catch colds or viruses. Studies have shown that simple hand-washing can help prevent a large number of illnesses. Wash your hands before meals, any time you will be touching your eyes, nose or mouth, or if you've been around others who are sick.

5. Avoid caffeine and sugary drinks

Though caffeinated beverages like soda and energy drinks can be beneficial when studying or doing late-night homework, they are ultimately harmful in the long run. The combination of caffeine and sugar in these drinks causes you to crash and feel bad later. If you need an energy boost, try eating foods high-protein, high-fiber foods.

6. Get a flu shot

This is one of the easiest ways to avoid the flu and stay healthy through the winter. Many colleges offer flu shots and screenings for reduced prices, usually under $25. Though it may still be expensive for those on a tight budget, getting a shot now will be much better and cheaper in the long run than getting the flu later.

7. Drink lots of water

Staying hydrated can help your concentration and keep you from overeating. It also replenishes your body and gives you more energy throughout the day. Always choose water instead of soda, and bring water with you while you walk to class. Also, to cut down on the cost, buy a water filtration pitcher and a re-usable water bottle instead of plastic bottled water.

8. Relax

College students are usually pretty stressed with classes and exams, but relaxing and having down-time is essential to staying healthy. Stress can cause numerous problems and getting too run-down can adversely affect your health. The easiest way to relax is to create a routine and give yourself regular breaks. Also, make sure you make time to hang out with friends and de-stress by reading a book, watching your favorite television show or even playing video games. All within reason, of course.

Call the Office of Student Success at 601-925-7776.

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