

Food for Thought: Smart Eating for Health and Fitness

College students are faced with many challenges each day. They have to learn how to manage school, work, and social obligations, food intake and exercise. Sometimes there just aren't enough hours in a day to fit it all in smoothly. It is no wonder that eating patterns often suffer. With so little time, and such stress, it is easier to grab something quick without regard to health. But food intake doesn't need to be complicated or time consuming in order to be healthy. And good eating habits will go a long way in aiding overall success academically. Eating well will help strengthen the immune system, provide needed fuel for short and long term activities, and even help with short-term recall. So dig in, but follow a few simple guidelines for smarter eating:

1. **Follow the food guide pyramid** to be assured of adequacy and balance with food choices, and limit, but don't eliminate fat.
2. **Emphasize fruits and vegetables** - Bagged baby carrots, V8 or tomato juice, boxes of raisins, juice boxes, and apples are quick ways to keep fruits and vegetables on hand. If you have to eat fast food, begin the meal with two of these fruits and vegetables and you will be satisfied with a smaller fast food meal. Less fat and calories, and more fiber mean better health and fitness!
3. **Keep food in your system** every 3 to 4 hours. Choose small snacks such as granola bars, individual boxes of cereal, string cheese, individual puddings, and applesauce, or raisins etc. as light snacks between meals.
4. **Enjoy eating and allow yourself small amounts of pleasurable foods**, but keep amounts small! One brownie, a sliver of cheesecake, 2 Hershey kisses, etc. won't hurt anyone, but large amounts of these items consumed regularly will result in unwanted weight gain and missed nutrients from other needed foods.
5. **Exercise regularly!** This doesn't mean walking to class every day, though that is a great idea. You need to get your heart rate up and keep it elevated in a rhythmic fashion for about 30 minutes 4 to 5 days each week. This will help keep you fit, manage stress, and improve esteem - benefits every college student can use!

Follow these guidelines and eating will be easy, fun, and healthy, and will promote your success in the academic world!