

Nutrition Tips for College Students

Budgeting

It doesn't have to be expensive to eat healthily. Some of the most nutritious meals are actually the most inexpensive. Put aside a certain amount of your weekly income and do weekly grocery shopping. If you have a freezer you can bulk buy foods on special offer and freeze them. If you have a large load, you can now even shop online and get free delivery! If you stick with one supermarket you can accumulate points and get money vouchers to spend on a future shop.



How to eat on a budget:

1. Cook dinner regularly at home and save eating out for special occasions.
2. Bring a packed lunch to college. You get to eat exactly what you like, you don't have to queue at the canteen, and it's probably healthier.
3. Avail of special offers i.e. buy one get one free.
4. Bulk buy i.e. large packs are cheaper in long run.
5. Make large quantities of one meal and freeze it for times when you don't feel like cooking e.g. chicken curry. It also means less waste.
6. Share the load – why not take turns with cooking for your flatmates or friends. You can share the cost and the work!
7. Take advantage of the cheaper price of foods in season. Out of season foods are more expensive as they are not easily available.
8. Try to visit the markets. Some foods can be fresher and better value.
9. Remember there is no need to spend extra money buying organic. They are not nutritionally superior to normal produce.

Nutritious easy meal ideas

Plan your meals in advance so you will have all your ingredients to hand to make these nutritious meal options.

- **Breakfast**

1. Cereal with milk, and a glass of fruit juice
2. Granary toast with spread, and a cup of tea
3. Wholegrain bagel with chopped banana and a yogurt drink
4. Boil, scramble or poach an egg and have it with toast and a glass of fruit juice when you have extra time in the mornings

- **Lunch**

1. Sandwich or bread roll or wrap with meat/chicken/turkey/tuna/cheese/egg and salad, a bag of popcorn, and a yogurt
2. A bowl of soup with a filled bread roll, and a piece of fruit

- **Dinner**

1. Spaghetti Bolognaise
2. Baked beans and cheese on a jacket potato
3. Scrambled eggs on toast
4. Omelette with tomato and peppers, and oven chips
5. Tortilla wraps filled with stir fried chicken or beef and plenty of vegetables
6. Chilli con carne with boiled rice
7. Pasta with tuna, sweet corn and mayonnaise
8. Beef or lamb stew with added potatoes and vegetables
9. Grilled Meat/chicken/fish, vegetables, & potatoes



Meal pattern

Eating regularly allows sustained energy release throughout the day. Try to have 3 main meals – breakfast, lunch and dinner – and a few healthy snacks in between. Avoid skipping meals during the day. Skipping meals can lead to overeating later in the day or at night. All meals are important, but breakfast has been found to particularly improve concentration levels.

Healthy snacks

Need a snack in a hurry? There are plenty of healthy options available in shops. Choose from the following list:

- **Fresh or dried fruit**
- **Wholemeal or fruit scone**
- **Yogurt or Yogurt drink**
- **Smoothies**
- **Popcorn**
- **Cereal bar**
- **Crackers and cheese**
- **Bowl of Breakfast cereal**
- **Toasted bagel with cream cheese**
- **Nuts**
- **Sesame sticks / Trail mix**



Omega 3 for brain power



Omega 3 is a polyunsaturated fat. There are 3 main types of omega 3 fat: *alpha linoleic acid* *eicosapentanoic Acid* (EPA) and *docosahexanoic Acid* (DHA). Flaxseed contains some alpha linoleic acid and your body can use this to make EPA and DHA. However it is very difficult for the body to convert alpha linoleic acid to EPA or DHA so it is important to get your omega 3 from oil-rich fish which are rich sources of EPA and DHA. Oil rich fish include salmon, sardines, herring, trout, kippers, fresh tuna and mackerel. When included in a healthy diet, EPA and DHA have many benefits. They are anti-inflammatory, anti-thrombotic (help to make blood less sticky and so help prevent heart attacks and strokes) and has been found to improve brain function, including memory and ability to solve problems. Your brain will not function at its fullest potential unless it has an adequate supply of omega 3. Omega 6 is a different type of fatty acid which is need in smaller amounts. Omega 6 is found mainly in oils – sunflower, walnut, soybean, corn, safflower, and wheatgerm oil. Ideally, try to reduce your intake of omega 6 and increase your intake of omega 3. Include one portion of oily fish in your diet per week. Some of these fish are available tinned which is relatively inexpensive.

Hydration

Suggested drinks during your college day include water, fruit juice, fruit smoothies, milk, diet minerals, soup or decaffeinated beverages. To ensure you are adequately hydrated you need 8 -10 cups or glasses of such fluid daily. Dehydration can lead to fatigue, poor concentration and bad breath. Tea and coffee can contribute to your total fluid intake, but the majority of your intake should not come from these. Caffeine is a stimulant and, while it can give you a sudden energy boost, it is an artificial one and your energy levels will plummet later in the day. Try not to rely on caffeinated drinks to get you through your lectures or exams. Tea and coffee can also cause you to pass urine more frequently.

Alcohol

Maximum alcohol units have been set by health professionals. It recommended that no more than **21 units for men and 14 units** should be consumed in a week.



is
for women

A unit of alcohol = A glass of beer / 100 ml wine / 3/4 measure

of spirits

Alcohol taken in excess can change your behaviour and increase your risk of developing serious medical conditions like pancreatitis and liver disease. Alcohol contains empty calories. Regular excessive drinking can cause weight gain. A pint of beer contains approximately 300 calories. It does not contain protein, vitamins or minerals.



With many social events during the college year, adhering to the advised maximum units can be a formidable task. Try taking some non-alcoholic fluids when you are out. It is also better to spread your alcohol intake over the week rather than taking all your units in one night in an alcohol binge.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

If you find you are not achieving a balanced diet in college, and are particularly below the target of 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables daily, you could consider taking a general multivitamin. If you are feeling very tired, you should perhaps attend your GP because fatigue can be due to nutritional deficiencies, for example iron deficiency anaemia.

How to be a healthier student

College students are renowned for their unhealthy eating habits. Use the above tips to make sure that you are eating a balanced diet to fuel your student lifestyle this year. You wouldn't expect a car to run if you didn't fill it with petrol, so 'fill up' with good healthy meals. You will have more energy and better concentration levels. Don't forget to combine your healthy eating plan with regular exercise.

Useful Links

Look up the following links for more recipes and cooking suggestions:

- Safefood Recipes: http://www.safefoodonline.com/c_teens_recipes.asp
- VHI student's guide to nutrition: <http://www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-016.jsp>
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara on how to cook fish:
http://www.bim.ie/templates/cooking_fish.asp?node_id=404