

The Freshman 15:

How to Work it Off or Avoid it Altogether

By Alena Hall

At the start of the first fall semester, we all dread it. As we adjust to new friends, new classes and new living conditions, our eating habits fall by the wayside. However, losing the "freshman 15" or preventing it entirely does not have to be the daily challenge most people perceive it to be. Consider the following tips to make eating right and loving college life simple and fun!

Just think about it. Calories burned subtracted from calories consumed equal a person's net calories. Remember this common health class fact at every meal—awareness is the best prevention against overeating.

Get off the couch. Watch the television from the cardio room in Rams Head Recreation Center or the Student Recreation Center instead of the dorm room! Even just power walking at a steep incline on a treadmill can burn 250 calories in 30 minutes. Also make working out fun by trying out a group fitness class like zumba or kickboxing with your friends!

Walk it off. Avoid using the bus for simple campus commutes. Walking or riding your bike to class burns more calories and provides a slight adrenaline boost that keeps you focused throughout class. Save the bus ride for a rainy day.

Get the dining hall to go. You can fit less food into the eco-friendly take-out boxes than you can on several plates as you make your rounds at the pizza bar. When filling your dinner plate, make sure that half of its contents are green vegetables. The other half of the plate should balance between a protein source like grilled chicken and a complex carbohydrate such as brown rice.

Get involved in campus activities. Intramural sports are a great way to spend time with friends, meet new people, try a new outdoor activity, and get your sweat on.

Snack smart. The Well-Being's website, www.unc.edu/twbmag, provides a great list of guilt-free snacks to keep on hand in your dorm room when the munchies strike. Stick to nutritious foods such as granola bars, fresh fruit, trail mix and yogurt.

Drink water. One cup of coffee with skim milk and Splenda in the morning can wake you up and provide a metabolic boost with very little caloric consequence. Afterward, stick to water for the rest of the day in order to stay hydrated, satisfy feelings of hunger caused by thirst, and avoid extra "liquid" calories found in other drink options. Green tea is a great alternative to water because it provides a small energy boost, important antioxidants, and belly fat-blasting power with few calories.

Update your app list. Download a calorie-counting app on your phone, iPod, iPad, etc. to keep an easy food diary on your person at all times. You will quickly learn about which foods to avoid and which foods to rely on in your daily diet. The LIVESTRONG.com Calorie Tracker and the ZEDA INC. Calorie Counter are popular apps worth a try!

Catch some z's. Don't underestimate the importance of sleep. Going to bed really late and robbing your body of its necessary 7-8 hours of sleep a night disrupts your metabolic system, slowing it down and depriving it of fat-blasting and calorie-burning power during the day. Plus, you burn calories when you sleep, too!

Do it for yourself. Avoiding the "freshman 15" doesn't have to be about how you look—focus on how you feel! Eating healthy and being active makes you a more energetic, positive, and beautiful person from the inside out!

