

NEWS

Little evidence to support the Freshman 15

Stacey Murray
Advertising Manager

Although most students have heard of the infamous 15 pounds they are destined to gain their first year at university, there is little evidence to support the theory, studies show.

Many institutions have conducted research surrounding first-year eating habits but few have resulted in evidence supporting the drastic weight increase.

The Journal of American College Health, for example, said "findings revealed no significant weight gain at the end of the year." Average weight gain was 2.46 pounds for first-years.

The British Nutrition Foundation cited similar results although they reported a significant decrease in energy intake.

Even so, there are many limitations to research on the matter, including self-reported weight and the chance people who gained shied away from completing follow up surveys, said Jennifer Taylor, the Family and

Nutritional Science Department chair at UPEI.

Other studies report drastic weight gain after leaving the nest. Cornell University in New York State found out of 60 students to take part in their study, the average weight gain was six pounds in 12 weeks.

If the trend continued, their weight increase would amount to 20, not 15 pounds.

Taylor said while many think weight gain is an individual responsibility, energy dense and high-calorie food typical to university residence meal plans make it harder for students to avoid temptation and make healthy choices.

"If your environment sets you up for failure, it's that much more difficult."

Many times, healthy food is offered, but it costs more than convenience foods like french fries and cheeseburgers. She also said some of the healthier options aren't appealing to students.



Photo: Stacey Murray

Mike Eyolfson, executive chef for the Wanda Wyatt Dining Hall, says staff appreciates student input about healthier options.

Allison Desroches, a second-year nursing student, said there are many choices for residence students, but students need to take the initiative to choose them.

"It really depends on what you eat."

She also said cafeteria staff is open to suggestions for alternative options for students and there is always a healthy selection to choose from.

Taylor said while this is true, the healthy options don't always agree with students' taste buds.

"Students have to have attractive and healthy substitutes."

Angela Marchbank, the health and wellness coordinator at UPEI said high caloric intake and reduced

physical activity contribute to weight gain, although there are other factors as well.

"I think part of it is stress. Stress is what adds on extra pounds."

Many students deal with stress differently but a common trend is stress-eating, where students pay little attention to the food because they feel overwhelmed in other areas of their life.

Marchbank said one way to combat weight gain is to find other methods to relieve stress and tension in ways that doesn't involve eating.

Physical activity is one way to deal with stress. Students pay an annual fee for fitness facilities so they should take advantage of them, she said.

Ways to combat the freshman 15

If you live on campus...

Opt for milk and water instead of juice and pop, which are high in sugar and calories

Control your portions, instead of taking advantage of unlimited foods. Also make sure the majority of your plate consists of grain, fruits, and vegetables

Ask for healthier choices. Many times, staff is open to suggestions from students if they are reasonable.

Thy the baked potato instead of fries

If you live off campus...

Bite the bullet and buy skillets, pots, and baking pans. You'll be more prone to cooking if you've spent the money on the proper tools.

Use the Internet. There are endless recipes for anything in your fridge. Search words such as "easy", "low-cost", and "quick" help filter out time-consuming and difficult recipes.

Opt for whole grain products in place of white bread and pasta. Also, tomato-based sauces are healthier and lower in fat than cream-based sauces.

Cook meals in bulk. This way, you won't be slaving over a stove every day. Freeze the extra so you have a variety of pre-cooked foods ready.

Source: Jennifer Taylor,
Family and Nutritional Science chair UPEI

UPEI STORM WATCH

INFORMATION ABOUT CAMPUS CLOSURES OR DELAYS IN OPENING
If a decision is made to close or delay opening the UPEI campus,
details will be available as follows:

Radio Stations:

Radio announcements by 7:00 a.m. if possible, and throughout the day when required: CFCY/Magic 93, CBC Radio, K-Rock and Ocean 100, and C102 (Summerside).

UPEI Hotline:

A recorded message, by 7:00 a.m. if possible, on the UPEI hotline with updates as necessary throughout the day at 894-2882.

UPEI Website:

An urgent notice, in red, at the top of the news and events bar of the UPEI website, www.upei.ca

