

Getting Healthy at the Perfect Time

By Olivia Garrett

The infamous freshman fifteen is an indicator that college students oftentimes forget healthy habits. What many do not realize is that one's college years are the perfect time to start taking control.

Nutritious eating and regular physical activity can help students feel energized, stay alert in class, learn better and lower the risk for diseases later in life. Carol Hatcher, a personal trainer of 17 years, agrees that these habits have both physical and mental benefits.

"I have always found that people who make a healthy lifestyle a priority to be more productive individuals with positive attitudes," Hatcher said.

Transitioning into college life can be hard and some struggle to find a routine. There's no longer a homemade meal from Mom every night or a regular workout after school. College is known for the convenience of junk food in the dorms and late nights cramming for exams.

"College is a whole new world," said Hatcher. "Too often exercise takes a backseat to other activities of this new lifestyle."

One tip is to make exercise a daily routine. Experts say 30 minutes of activity 4-5 days a week will improve one's overall health. These 30 minutes do not have to take place on a treadmill. Playing Frisbee in the courtyard, shooting hoops during open gym or just taking the stairs instead of the elevator are all types of activity to get you moving.

The Marshall community offers various options to stay active as well: the YMCA, the Fitness Center on campus and Anytime Fitness. Anytime Fitness is even open 24 hours which is perfect for college students.

An active lifestyle and a healthy diet go hand in hand. Some suggestions for healthier eating include: exercising portion control, eating regular meals, eating a variety of foods (especially fruits and vegetables) and cutting down on fats and sugars. All are good places to start the transition to eating healthy.

On the other hand, inactivity and unhealthy foods aren't the only contributor to weight gain in college. According to Hatcher, stress is the number one reason college students put on extra weight. This problem can, and should, be tackled at an early age when stress first starts to affect one's life. College is merely a glimpse into what the full-time work world is like, so figuring out how to de-stress before leaving the world of academia is essential.

Building a solid foundation for a healthy life is key to top notch performance during the most important years to come. Plus, these habits can last a lifetime. I think I'll take the stairs today.

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