

# Staying Energized, Maintaining Weight... ... Nutrition Tips for Busy Students



Erratic schedules, food availability, and decision-making challenges often make healthy food choices tough for students. The result may include energy highs and lows, general lethargy, and unwanted weight gain or loss. Use these “student-friendly” ideas to help balance your energy and weight, and to provide a general sense of well-being.

>**Drink enough fluids** throughout the day to keep your **urine pale and clear**, but **avoid nutritionally “empty” calories** (regular sodas, lemonade, punch, fruit drinks, alcoholic beverages). Best choices: water, milk (up to 32 oz/day), calcium fortified fruit juice (8-oz), weak tea, flavored waters, crystal light.

>**Eat something (“breakfast”)** within an hour of waking up to get your metabolism running and to avoid “catch up” eating later in the day.

> **Create some structure and eat throughout the day**, even if it varies from day to day, to give you a steady stream of energy, to avoid getting too hungry and grabbing for anything, and to help prevent mindless grazing. Eat foods you really like and savor them, take smaller bites, chew well, take your time. Avoid eating right from the bag, carton, or box; take out a satisfying serving and put the rest away. Go back for more only if you are truly hungry. Eat when hungry, stop when full. Seems simple, but this could make a big difference.


>**Plan ahead.** Buy handy foods to carry with you during the day, whether it is a whole meal, add-ons to food you buy around campus, or snacks. Get some Baggies and pack foods the night before, when possible. An insulated lunch bag with blue ice frees you to also take refrigerated items. Some good choices are:

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| •Fresh fruit  | •Whole grain bread, crackers  | •Yogurt – 1% or fat free   |
| •Baby carrots, green/red peppers, sliced cucumbers (low fat ranch dressing for dip) | •Cereals (to eat dry) - Cheerios <sup>®</sup> , Frosted Mini-Wheats <sup>®</sup> , Kashi Go-Lean <sup>®</sup> , Raisin Squares <sup>®</sup> , Chex <sup>®</sup> | •String cheese, part-skim mozzarella, or cottage cheese, low fat processed cheese slices |
| •Trail mix (make your own using nuts, dried fruit, and cereal, pretzels, etc.)      | •Nutrition bars or drinks – look for those around 200 calories with 7 or more grams of protein  | •Soups – ready to eat (with beans or lentils for protein)                                |
| •Peanut(and other nut) butter   | •Nuts and soy nuts  | •Popcorn – low fat   |
| •Pretzels   | •Oatmeal  | •Sugar-free hot chocolate  |
| •Tea – herbal   | •Deli meats   | •Tuna  |

> **Make healthy late night and study snack choices.** Balance carbohydrates with protein. Include some nuts, tuna, meat, cheese, yogurt, or milk with your carb snacks like fruit, veggies, crackers, pretzels, bagels, etc. See food and beverage choices above.

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> **When eating** out or at the Student Unions, look for our new **“SMART MOVE” icon**  which identifies foods that taste good and are good for you. **Other ways** to reduce the unhealthy fats and sugars, and improve the nutrition are by regularly using a few of these ideas:

## **Instead of:**

- Large, specialty hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hot dogs, mayo and sauces
- Hamburgers or beef items
- “Salad” sandwiches (chicken, tuna, egg)
- Putting dressing on your salad
- Fries, onion rings, regular chips
- Soda, lemonade, fruit juice, diet soda

## **Choose:**

- Regular-sized hamburgers with added catsup, BBQ sauce, pickles, lettuce, tomatoes, onion
- Grilled chicken sandwiches or other grilled chicken or bean dishes (e.g. tacos, burritos)
- Deli sandwiches with lean meats (turkey, chicken, ham and roast beef), a small amount of cheese, and lots of vegetables
- Put dressing on the side. A tablespoon (~100 calories) is about the size of a book of matches. Low fat dressing is half the calories.
- Baked chips, pretzels, carrots (you pack)
- Water, non-caloric flavored water, Milk (white or chocolate)

> **Don’t over-do caffeine.** Most experts recommend no more than 400mg per day. Caffeine content of some of the more popular beverages on campus are: 12 oz cola - 65mg; brewed coffee - 125mg (12 oz ) to 250mg (Starbucks Venti), one shot of espresso - 35mg.

> **Take a multivitamin/mineral daily** as an insurance policy against the gaps that can occur when hectic schedules undo even your best intentions.

> **Take a calcium supplement daily** if you eat little or no dairy products or calcium-fortified foods (OJ, cereal). You need at least a total of 1000 mg per day for great bones and to possibly help with weight maintenance.

## **Resources:**

- For more information on specific topics and practical suggestions for snacks, all meals and eating out, go to [www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu), click on Health Promotion, then on Nutrition (left column).
- Check out [uacookingoncampus.com](http://uacookingoncampus.com) for lots of res hall-friendly (and other) “recipes” that are easy and tasty. Also, plan to attend a Cooking on Campus class. They’re only \$5, you cook, eat, and have fun. Details are on the website.