

Avoiding the Freshman 15

Now that you've been at Mason a few weeks, you've had a chance to sample the wide variety of foods offered by our Dining Services. You may have also ventured out to eat at some of the restaurants around Fairfax and D.C. If you've been enjoying too much good food, you may have noticed that your clothes are feeling tight. You may have *gained* some weight. That's the beginning of the "Freshman 15" – the 15 pounds that many freshmen gain their first year (or even their first semester!).

We'd like to give you some tips for preventing the (dreaded) "Freshman 15." Let's talk about habits you need to *watch out for* as you make food and exercise choices.

Watch out for **late night snacking**. Sometimes those "snacks" have as many calories as a whole meal. When you eat close to bedtime, there's little chance for you to burn the calories which get stored as fat, which leads to those unwanted extra pounds. Try to eat 5-6 small meals throughout the day. This will give you a constant source of "fuel" for energy and stave off that ravenous hunger that may hit you at night. Try having a glass of water or a piece of fruit when you're hungry late at night. Other healthy snacks include string cheese, yogurt, popcorn and veggies with salsa.

Watch out for **portion size**. A serving (2-3 ounces) of meat, fish or poultry is about the size of a deck of cards. A serving of cheese is 1½ ounces. A serving of pasta is only ½ a cup! ... ½ of a 3 inch Bagel ... ½ cup ice cream ... 10 French fries ... <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

Watch out for **the calories you drink**. 20 oz. soda - 240 calories; Venti Latte – 290 calories; Glass of OJ - 160 calories; 12 oz. Smoothie - 300 calories. We recommend that students who are trying to lose weight not drink anything with calories, except milk. Fruit has a lot of fiber. Fruit juice has a lot of sugar. The bottom line – **Drink more water**.

Watch out for **vending machine** snacks. Try to avoid vending machines. If you're truly hungry, healthy choices include baked chips, unsalted nuts, animal crackers, cheese sticks, yogurt, fresh fruits and vegetables, pretzels, some granola bars.

Watch out for **salad dressings**. Do choose salad for one meal each day. But ... some restaurant salads are covered in a dressing that may contain up to 1,000 calories. Creamy salad dressings have the most fat and calories. Ask for your dressing on the side and then use it sparingly ~ 2 tablespoons is usually enough. And, watch out for those fatty salad toppings like croutons, cheese and bacon bits.

Watch out for **pizza** - usually high in fat, calories and simple carbohydrates. Try ordering vegetable toppings instead of extra cheese or fatty meats. Remember a serving of pizza is ONE slice! And, don't eat pizza too close to bedtime (see **late night snacking** above).

And most importantly, watch out for not getting enough **exercise**. The easiest way to prevent weight gain is to exercise! You may have been on a sports team in high school and got plenty of exercise during practice. Now, you may need to *schedule* your exercise. We recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on all or most days of the week. These minutes can be broken up into 10 - 15 minute segments. The exercise can be as simple as walking briskly to classes. Choose activities that you **enjoy**. Check out intramural and club sports like soccer, basketball, lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee.... Try biking, jogging, basketball, swimming or dancing. For more ideas: <http://recsports.gmu.edu/>

For the calorie content of many foods: <http://caloriecount.about.com/>

For a personal eating and exercise plan: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

For more information or to schedule an appointment for one-on-one encouragement or to discuss these and other exercise and nutrition tips, go to: <http://shs.gmu.edu/> - your Student Health Services website.