

NUTRITION SURVIVAL

Nutrition Topics
University of New Hampshire

Nutrition Survival

Many activities associated with college, like sports, parties and all-nighters can make the best years of your life the roughest years for your body. It's important to give your body what it needs so you can make the best of your time here at UNH. Read on for some hints for staying healthy.

Daytime Drowsiness If you always feel tired during the day but know you're getting enough sleep, you may want to try cutting down on the amount of sugar you consume. You may also want to try eating more fruits and vegetables (or taking a multivitamin if you're missing certain food groups). The most common symptom of almost all vitamin and mineral deficiencies is fatigue. If it becomes a serious problem you may want to consult a doctor.

Trouble Sleeping? Insomnia is a common problem on a college campus. If you are having trouble sleeping, try eating more carbohydrates a few hours before going to bed, and stay away from caffeine. It may also help to go to sleep and wake up at similar times each day so your body establishes a pattern. If insomnia becomes a serious problem for you, then you may want to talk to a doctor about relaxation methods.

Skipping Meals From a nutritional perspective skipping meals is not recommended. Skipping meals equals skipping nutrition. However, during college, deciding whether to eat, sleep or cram is often not a matter of nutritional concern. If you don't have time to sit down and enjoy a meal, grab an easy snack like a piece of fruit to get something in your body. Eating nothing at all confuses your metabolism and may impair your ability to concentrate in class. If you know ahead of time that you won't be able to make it to a meal at the dining hall, utilize our "grab and go" options and don't forget about late night hours.

Exercise Regular exercise is the best way to ensure good health. It is recommended to exercise for about 30 minutes at least three times a week. In addition to helping maintain weight, exercise can also increase bone strength, regulate cholesterol and blood pressure, strengthen the heart and lungs, increase metabolism and relieve stress. The Whittemore Center has exercise and strength-training equipment, an indoor track, basketball, squash and racquetball courts, aerobics classes and intramural sports teams. There are also free swim times at the pool located in the Field House. If going to a gym isn't your thing, then walk, run or bicycle around the campus.

Stress Every college student has experienced stress. Stress causes many negative changes to occur in our body, like an increase in blood pressure and pulse rate. Over a long period of time stress can also increase the risk of heart disease and lower the effectiveness of the immune system. Some common symptoms of stress include headaches, insomnia, poor energy level, stomach cramps associated with diarrhea and/or constipation, irritability, poor concentration, and inability to relax.

Alcohol and Hangovers Alcohol offers no nutritional benefits, except calories, and actually interferes with the absorption of some important nutrients. Alcohol can damage your liver and impair your judgement and ability to think. However, this still does not stop many college students from drinking alcohol. Sometimes when people drink in excess they experience a sick feeling the next day called a hangover. Hangovers are the result of the by-products of ethanol and other chemicals contained in alcoholic beverages metabolizing in the body. This is accompanied with a general dehydration of the body. There is no quick cure for a hangover, but you may be able to relieve the symptoms by drinking a lot of water before you go to bed to prevent dehydration and consuming sugar the next morning. A tall glass of fruit juice should give you the necessary sugar to metabolize the chemicals that are causing the hangover. Remember, the best way to prevent a hangover is to not drink alcohol at all, or at least drink only a moderate amount.

Caffeine Caffeine is one of the world's most widely used drugs. It acts as a mild stimulant and is found in foods and beverages like coffee, tea, chocolate and colas. Because of its stimulating effect, sometimes called a "caffeine high", it is very popular among students who need to pull an all-nighter or stay awake in an early morning class. The nature of the "caffeine high" varies from person to person. Some people show no response to caffeine while other people get completely strung out. Caffeine may help you stay wired for up to four hours after ingestion, but you'll probably feel even more tired when you come down from the high. Caffeine may also have some undesired side effects, like headaches, nausea, shaking, and nervousness. Pay attention to how your body feels after consuming caffeine. If you show signs of negative side effects try to avoid large doses of caffeine in the future. A brisk walk or cold shower can also wake you up and refresh you for a long night of studying or an early morning class.

Eating for an All-Night Study Session High-protein foods are best for getting through an all-nighter. Starches and sugars may make you sleepy. For dinner before an all-nighter skip the pasta and eat a high-protein meal that may include meat, milk, cheese and beans. Instead of snacking on cookies and chips during the night try cheese, peanut butter or hot-air popped popcorn.

For more information or to speak with the dietitian, call 603-862-2583 or email at rochelle.litalien@unh.edu.

Design by Rochelle L'Italien M.S., R.D. L.D.