

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Have you ever found yourself eating unconsciously while you're mentally writing a to-do list? I know I have! As a student, it often seems like there's not enough time in the day to eat. Between midterms, work commitments and essay deadlines, eating can become an overlooked and rushed afterthought. However mindful eating can transform mealtime into a refreshing and stress-relieving act.

10 Healthy Eating Tips for Busy Students

There are many benefits to healthy eating. Research has shown that what you eat can affect your mood and how you do in school, as well as a powerful role in your physical and mental health.

The average student is pressed for time, under a lot of stress and eating on the go. You may find it difficult to avoid bad habits, like skipping meals. But eating a healthy diet can help you feel better, cope with stress and perform better in the classroom. Here are 10 nutrition tips for busy students.

1. **Eat a good breakfast.** Studies show that skipping breakfast detracts from academic achievement. When there isn't time to sit down and enjoy your morning meal, grab a bagel, piece of fruit and some juice.
2. **Keep healthy snacks on hand.** This way, if hunger strikes during a late-night study session, you won't be tempted by candy, chips or ice cream. Possibilities include fresh or dried fruit, pretzels, unbuttered popcorn, rice cakes or whole wheat crackers. If you have a refrigerator, consider raw vegetables with low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese dip.
3. **Eat plenty of foods rich in calcium.** If you don't like milk, try to include ample amounts of low-fat yogurt, low-fat cheese and green leafy vegetables in your diet.
4. **Limit your sugar intake.** Sugar provides calories in your diet but few other nutrients. Use it sparingly.
5. **Limit your alcohol intake.** If you drink alcohol, keep in mind that it supplies calories but no nutritional value. A light beer, a glass of wine or an ounce of liquor each has about 100 calories. Limit your alcohol intake.
6. **Drink lots of water.** Your body needs at least eight glasses a day, and, if you exercise vigorously, you may need more. To remind yourself, carry a water bottle and keep it handy during late night study sessions.
7. **Enjoy your food.** Food is a lot more than nourishment for our bodies, so take the time to enjoy and savor it!

Eating and Stress

The stress response is your body's signal to adapt to changes in the environment. Everyone reacts differently to stress, but many people find comfort in food. This can lead to overeating or choosing less nutritious food.

Mindful eating can be helpful if your eating habits are affected by stress. It involves bringing more awareness to what, when and how you eat. Here are some tips to eat more mindfully:

- Remove any distractions (e.g. avoid watching Netflix during dinner)
- Reflect on and choose foods that are nourishing for your body.
- Notice the smells, flavours and textures of the food you are eating.
- Check-in throughout the meal

Smart Foods for University Students

Milk and yogurt. Low-fat dairy products are packed with protein and B vitamins that may help you concentrate and work efficiently. Milk and yogurt are fortified with vitamin D , which also supports brain health.

Oats. It's hard to beat oatmeal at breakfast. Oatmeal is a whole grain, which you digest slowly, giving your brain and body steady energy.

Blueberries. One of nature's perfect foods, blueberries are packed with nutrients that give them their deep-blue color. Some studies have linked blueberries to improved learning and memory.

Salmon. Salmon is one of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids, healthy fats that are good for the brain.

Walnuts. While all nuts provide brain fuel in the form of protein and both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, walnuts are best. Some studies have found that students who regularly ate walnuts were better at deductive reasoning. The healthy fat in nuts is still fat, so you don't want to eat too many. Stick to a daily 1-ounce serving -- just enough to fit in the palm of your hand.