

Healthy Choices

By Theresa Gillette, Debra Coleman, Matt Harmon

After two weeks of college, you may notice that healthy choices are not the easiest things to make. As much as mom calls to make sure you're eating right and exercising, you may find yourself fabricating what you have been up to since move-in day. Now, as your pants get smaller and you start regretting some choices you may have made, it's time to face the facts—healthy choices are a vital part of a successful college career. However, they expand beyond simply eating right and exercising. Below are some important aspects of having a healthy adult lifestyle:

Eating Well:

For many first-year students, college is the first time to make choices about food on their own. However, the idea of a balanced meal should not become obsolete. Making healthy choices not only affects the ability to avoid the “Freshman 15” but also plays a role in energy throughout the busy days. Even though it may seem difficult now, Lynchburg College has resources to help make better choices. The café has a system to promote a better lifestyle. Foods that should be eaten sparingly have a red light on the name card. Foods that should be eaten moderately have a yellow light and foods that can be eaten frequently have a green light. This is just one tool that Lynchburg College has to help students make smart choices. However, digression should always be used when eating in any food option on campus. The choices made here can be the foundation for a healthy or unhealthy life.

Exercise:

Exercise is critical to a healthy lifestyle. Remaining or becoming active in college is essential to a healthy lifestyle. While it may be easy for student athletes to remain active, other students can struggle with the temptation to be lazy. Between classes, homework, and extra-curricular activities, it can be difficult to find time for exercise and physical activity; however, it is essential to do so. Exercise is not only a good stress relief, it helps battle the “Freshman 15” and provides an extra burst of energy for the activities throughout the day. Exercise comes in many forms and does not have to be done alone. At Lynchburg College, we offer the Outdoor Leadership Program, fitness classes for credit or leisure, a gym, a track, intramural sports, club sports, local trails, and a beautiful dell to stroll through. Lynchburg offers many opportunities to become active but the choice starts with you. Taking an hour out of one’s day everyday to engage in physical activity is sure to pay off in overall happiness.

Hygiene:

While for many this section is a no-brainer, it is necessary to address the importance of hygiene as a part of a balanced healthy lifestyle. Living in a residence hall makes the spreading of germs extremely easy. Along with the sheets, notebooks, and chairs, each student at LC brings their own set of germs with them from home. Simply washing hands after using the restroom or sneezing can cut the spread of germs greatly. Also, cleaning rooms and showering regularly as well as keeping hand sanitizer around can keep students healthy and salvage friendships. Making time in one’s schedule for cleaning, laundry, and hygiene will help maintain healthy living in the first year and beyond.

Sleep:

College students are notorious for late nights and lack of sleep. While sometimes these nights are inevitable it is important to balance them with plenty of sleep. Sleeping boosts energy and focus throughout the day. Students who do not sleep regularly are not functioning at their highest capacity. While naps are wonderful for bursts of energy throughout a particularly long day it is important to not become dependent on them as a source of energy. Napping does not allow for the full sleeping cycle to occur, so it actually is hurtful in the long run. Make sure to get a full 7-8 hours of sleep on most days of the week to combat fatigue and illnesses. Lack of sleep lowers the immune system's ability to fight off illness.

Sex:

Like any other aspect of healthy living, sexual health is an important factor. Being sexually active is a choice some students make. However, abstinence is always the safest means of protection. For those who choose to be sexually active, keep in mind the need to be safe. There are many ways to do this on campus. The health center offers counseling on the best method of protection for each individual as well as selling condoms and performing GYN examinations. The health center also administers STD tests to promote sexual health. It is important to remember that not all students are sexually active and the choice to become active is a very personal and important one to make. Having sexual relations while under the influence of drugs and alcohol is not only irresponsible but risky. There are potentially legal ramifications to sexual intercourse with an intoxicated person. Using protection is something that many people forget about while intoxicated

and puts both parties at risk for not only sexually transmitted infections but also pregnancy. In order to remain safe sexually please remember to use safety or abstain completely.

Drinking and Drugs:

Drinking and recreational drugs are a part of every college campus. It is important to make wise decisions not only for your social and academic standings when it comes to these activities, but also for your health. Despite the fact that many first year students are under the legal drinking age of 21, there is also no way to get around it; you are compromising your health if you choose to participate in drinking alcohol. One can of beer usually has 110 calories and if you are choosing to binge drink, as some college students choose to do on the weekends, you could be consuming the same amount of calories as you would if you were to eat three steak dinners (livestrong.com, 2008)! Excessive drinking leads to many bad decisions and one of them is that you will undoubtedly pack on extra pounds and put your long term health at risk. Using drugs is illegal for all individuals everywhere and the use of them carries a zero tolerance policy at Lynchburg College. You will be suspended or kicked out of school if caught. In addition to these consequences the use of illegal drugs is a poor choice for your health. Illegal drugs carry few health benefits and in most cases lead to non-beneficial health activities, including but not limited to laziness, over eating, and impaired brain activity.

Mental Health:

Living a healthy life is not limited to physical health but also includes one's mental wellbeing. Being a first-year student, there are many new stresses one faces such as a large workload, social pressures, and adjusting to being on your own. However, it is

vital to learn to balance and prevent these stresses. While the workload on a syllabus may seem overwhelming at first, it is important to remember that attending class each day, doing assignments regularly, and splitting up larger assignments can help take some of the pressure off. Balancing the workload with a social life may also cause some stress. It is important to realize that making friends is a vital component of a healthy life, and therefore, extra-curricular and other social activities are important to attend.

Resources on Campus:

Lynchburg College is full of resources to aid in a healthy lifestyle. The Health Center is open from 8:30 am to 5 pm but stops accepting students at 4:30 pm. Health Center appointments are available but walk-ins are also welcomed. They are available for not only illness but sexual health as well. They provide many services to students at reduced or no cost as well as issuing prescriptions when needed or providing a medical referral. The phone number is: (434) 544 – 8357. Counselors at the Counseling Center are available by appointment not only for emotional support but also as nutritionists for dietary support. The phone number is: (434) 544 – 8616.

Article about drinking: <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/eds/detail?sid=35e2df76-3aca-47e5-b64b-a93e1a283546%40sessionmgr111&vid=1&hid=103&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#db=s3h&AN=77305725>

Works Cited

"7oz Steak Dinner Applebee's." *LIVESTRONG.COM*. N.p., Dec. 2008. Web. 10 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.livestrong.com/thedailyplate/nutrition-c>

alories/food/applebees/7oz-steak-dinner/>.

"Lynchburg College |." *Lynchburg College* /. Lynchburg College, n.d. Web. 10 Aug.

2012. <<http://www.lynchburg.edu/>>.