



AMERICAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION OF INDIANA, INC.
DAIRY & NUTRITION COUNCIL, INC.

FACT SHEET

Beat the Freshman 15

- ◆ Enrollment rates for college freshmen in the United States have hit historical highs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the 2.9 million students who graduated from high school in 2009, 2.1 million enrolled in college – a five percent increase from 2008.
- ◆ The term “Freshman 15” originally referred to the typical number of credit hours full-time students take each semester, but pop culture now claims that 15 is the number of pounds many college students gain their first year away from home. This assumption has weight, according to a study in the *Journal of American College Health*, which found that nearly 70 percent of students put on pounds between the start of college and the end of sophomore year.
- ◆ The Freshman 15 may not be a myth, according to researchers from Brown University and Purdue University. After studying more than 1,200 freshmen, they found the average weight gain among college freshmen is near 8 pounds during the first 12 weeks on campus.
- ◆ Whether it’s 8 or 15 pounds, nutrition experts agree it’s the same phenomenon contributing to the obesity epidemic among all Americans, including college students – even a small increase in daily calories causes significant weight gain over time. In fact, a study at Cornell University found freshmen consumed an average of 174 extra calories per day from “empty calorie” foods and beverages – those with little nutritional value. These added calories cause students to pack on more than ¼ pound each week – 11 times the average weekly weight gain of healthy 17 to 18 year olds.
- ◆ Late night eating may be responsible for college weight gain, according to the American College of Sports Medicine. On average, students consume 500 extra calories, or about 20 percent of their daily energy needs, between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m.
- ◆ College freshmen flunk when it comes to good nutrition. Results from the Tufts Longitudinal Health Study reveal students do not meet their nutritional needs. Sixty-six percent do not eat enough fruits and vegetables; 50 percent do not get enough fiber, and 30 percent do not eat enough calcium-rich foods. Researchers noted the results are significant because eating habits developed during college years often continue into one’s 20s and 30s.
- ◆ A study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* suggests low-fat dairy intake may be associated with less weight gain, lower body fat and better overall diet quality in first-year students. However, results of a one-year study of 76 college freshmen showed, on average, students consumed less than 1.5 servings of dairy each day, failing to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans’ recommendations for three daily servings of low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt.
- ◆ The American Council of Exercise recommends the following lifestyle tips to help freshmen avoid first-year weight gain and establish healthy habits: eating three meals a day, packing nutrient-rich snacks, exercising regularly, practicing stress management and getting plenty of sleep.