

Eight Quick Tips to Jumpstart Dining Hall Health

Always eat breakfast.

Eating breakfast has been connected with weight loss and maintenance. In one study, three-fourths of individuals who had lost weight and maintained that weight loss reported eating breakfast daily (Wing and Phelan 2005). In the NHANES study, a large-scale study across the United States, individuals who ate cereal and cooked cereal had lower body mass indexes (BMIs) than people who skipped breakfast (Cho et al. 2003). Eating breakfast can also jumpstart your day by providing essential carbohydrates and protein to get you going and keep you from being hungry during class or at the gym.

Focus on fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables are low in fat and calories and high in fiber. Always include at least one for each of your meals and snacks.

Drink milk at meals.

One of the easiest ways to get your calcium is to drink milk or calcium-fortified soy milk with meals. It is easy to remember, will stop soda temptations, and will be habit forming!

Follow your hunger cues.

Learn to listen to your body. Make sure you always feel hungry before you eat; otherwise, you may be storing that excess energy as fat! You don't have to be starving, but always ask yourself: am I hungry? Would a cold glass of water help? Or maybe a piece of fruit instead of a cheeseburger and onion rings?

Avoid seconds and thirds.

Many dining halls are all-you-can-eat, which means you can go back as many times as necessary until you are stuffed! Try this instead: after you eat your first plate of food, wait at least fifteen minutes before you go back to get seconds. Give yourself time to feel full (sometimes it takes more than fifteen minutes to feel full). If you are still hungry after dinner, skip the dessert table and get a piece of fruit to dip in yogurt, or some nonfat frozen yogurt topped with fresh peaches or strawberries.

Look for whole grains.

Whole grains are good for you! They contain extra fiber and they make you feel fuller than white refined grains do. Look for products that say whole wheat or whole grains. Try some hot oatmeal one

cool morning, use brown rice with your stir-fry, make a sandwich loaded with vegetables on whole-wheat bread or choose whole-wheat pasta for dinner (ask your dining hall manager to switch).

Schedule your meals.

Scheduled meal times may sound a little odd, but it helps you establish a pattern. If you follow that pattern, it will help you eat before you are over hungry, which usually leads you to eat anything and everything in sight. Scheduled meal times can also help you plan out what you are going to eat and how to make some healthy choices. It also helps you anticipate the need for snacks or quick meals if you are going to be on the run for most of the day.

Remember 90 – 10.

And finally, follow the 90-10 rule: eat healthy 90% of the time, eat what you want 10% of the time!