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College students start to make own eating choices

By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

For many students, college is their first time being away from home and experiencing certain freedoms — and this includes food choices.

It may be tempting to load up on processed snack foods and fast food like McDonald's or Taco Bell, especially for students who live in the residence halls and have limited options for food preparation. For most students, college is the first time they completely have freedom to eat whatever they want and so they go all out and make less nutritious choices

This can make for mindless snacking and lead to gaining the dreaded “freshman 15.”

“So far in life, someone else has bought the groceries and prepared meals for them,” Susan Lukwago, a dietician with the Women Infants Children department, said “When you get to college, you have to do this yourself and may not get around to it.”

However, Lukwago said there are ways students can prevent gaining the 'freshman 15,' including telling a friend or family member the desire to be more healthy and exercising with others.

"For most humans, including college students, it is a little easier to do what you said you would do if you are accountable to someone else," Lukwago explained.

Some healthy snacks students can prepare and store in dorm rooms include apples, oranges, grapes, strawberries, peaches or any fresh fruit, fruit cups carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers, broccoli or any vegetables someone likes, water along with almonds, cashews and other nuts.

"Remember that most of us have access to more food than we need," Lukwago said. "You do not need to go crazy now that you can make your own choices."

If someone is already feeling the effects of unhealthy eating habits, there are ways to get back on track. including working out at either the Wellness Center on campus or in one of Liberal's many parks as well as snacking on fruits, vegetables or small servings of nuts.

The dorms at Seward County Community College/Area Technical School also encourage students to pick healthy options both from the stores but also in the cafeteria, which boasts a salad bar along with a meatless option and some sort of cooked protein, like chicken.

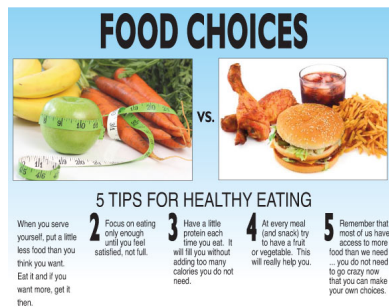
The dorms' policy allows students to have a small microwave and a small fridge and they're allowed to bring almost any type of food they like – however, students can not have toasters or or anything like a hot plate or Foreman grills due to fire safety issues.

"I think a lot of it is convenience – it might be easier to grab a bag of chips than make a healthy snack," Kate Mulligan, director of housing at SCC/ATS, said regarding unhealthy habits. "I also think some of them are away from their parents for the first time so they go all out on the junk food since they might not have been allowed it at home. I also think they stay up later than they

did at home so they also probably eat healthier because a pizza sounds better than an apple late at night.”

Even with restrictions in the dorms, however, Mulligan said students can get pretty creative with their snacks and room-prepared meals.

“I know there’s a lot of students who do eat fruits and vegetables and they eat a lot of peanut butter from what I’ve seen, on apples and rice cakes which I never thought would go together but they do,” Mulligan said. “I’ve also seen them get pretty creative with making rice...it’s hard to know yet what they’ll come up with this year.”



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