

# The Freshman 15

The Freshman 15: What it is and how to avoid it.

The "Freshman 15" is a term that is popular among the college crowd to describe the amount of weight that is typically gained by students during their freshman year of college. The claim is popular though not fully substantiated, and claims that the average freshman gains fifteen pounds during their first year of school. It is also noted that girls seem to be more vulnerable to the weight gain. The Freshman 15, as it's called, use to be known as the "Freshman 10", but typical weight gains over recent years have cited 15 pounds is about the average weight gain.

## Causes of the Freshman 15

The new living environment students face is the main cause of the Freshman 15. Being crammed into tiny dorm rooms along with the lack of a full service available kitchen can be limiting to students, and often leads to dorm room snacks or other readily available food items that are often deemed unhealthy.

There are many other causes for the freshman fifteen weight gain, including:

- An increase in alcohol intake (and the beer munchies that come along with it)
- The added consumption of cafeteria style and fast food.
- The intake of pizza and deep fried foods.
- The change in structure and environment.
- Eating late.
- Erratic eating and sleeping schedules.

More than seventy percent of college students gain at least a significant amount of weight beginning when they start college, and lasting until the end of sophomore year. Studies conducted by researchers at Washington University-St. Louis have shown that this is a common occurrence among college students, so much so that many people believe it to be an almost guaranteed phenomenon.

Students need to find a happy medium between studying, exercise, entertainment and a balanced sleep schedule to maintain optimum performance. Be sure to allot some extra money in your tight budget for athletics and other active recreational activities. Buy a gym membership, a pilates or yoga class, rock-climbing or other activities of interest. Consider roller blading or biking to and from classes. You'll get there quicker, and burn more calories. The typical dorm room is too small to hold any significant exercise equipment, so on a smaller level, consider dumbbells, exercise balls, jump ropes, and so on. All the other major exercise equipment can be found at your college fitness center.

## How to avoid the Freshman 15

Though it may be hard, and sometimes impossible to avoid any weight gain, here's what you can do to help avoid gaining the extra weight:

- Try and steer away from the typical college diet such as pizza and fast food.
- Join an Intramural Sports squad.
- Take advantage of the schools fitness center, which has tons of state of the art equipment to keep you fit.
- Eat more salads and healthy green foods.
- Stay on top of health basics: drink eight glasses of water, get proper sleep, ensure you are getting your required

vitamins and minerals, etc.