

INFLUENCING HEALTHY HABITS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Young adults, especially college students, have a high risk of weight gain. Rapid changes in their physical and social environments influence their eating and exercise habits. Excessive weight gain puts young adults at increased risk of developing serious diseases, including heart disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. Teaching young adults healthy behaviors has the potential to protect their quality of life for years to come.

Land grant universities are working together to identify individual and environmental factors that predispose, enable, and reinforce healthy eating and lifestyles among young adults. Researchers and Extension specialists are using this information to develop intervention programs that cater to young adults, particularly college students, and tools to help college campuses provide healthier environments.

The Young Adults Eating and Active for Health program sends emails with targeted online education resources that encourage healthy diet, physical activity, and stress management choices. Program participants significantly increased their fruit and vegetable intake, physical activity, and hours of sleep. This program can help young adults prevent obesity without dieting.

New approaches have successfully increased fruit and vegetable consumption among economically-disadvantaged young adults, a group that is especially at risk for obesity, but has been hard to reach in the past.

The College Environmental Perceptions Survey is a reliable tool for assessing college students' perceptions of their health-related campus environment.

The Healthy Campus Audit helps higher education campuses identify areas that need improvement, such as dining halls, convenience stores, and restaurants on or near college campuses that do not offer healthy food options.

The Health Density Vending Machine Audit Tool assesses the accessibility of vending machines and the healthfulness and price of their products.



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Learn more: <http://bit.ly/NC-1193>