



PHOTO: PAHN CHAKMA

How to eat better on campus

NOOHA SABANTA MAULA

Considering the typical meals and snacks options available on and around campuses, trying to eat healthy can be quite a struggle. Carrying homemade food might not always be feasible, especially for those who are in for a long day or commute long distances. While I'm no expert, for me it only makes sense to try to eat better and make choices that will reduce damages done to the body.

Although the options are limited, it is possible to eat better by swapping, reducing or avoiding completely some of the items commonly consumed on campuses. A little adjustment can go a long way. Here's how you can do it.

CUT DOWN YOUR SUGAR CONSUMPTION

Cutting out sugar is actually one of the hardest habits to curb due to the cravings that follow but avoiding sugar-containing items is one of the simplest routes to eating better. One of the most commonly consumed items is fizzy, sugary sodas. I think we all know it's not good for our systems but a common defence is that there aren't many other options. If just plain water is too bland for you, swap the soda for a freshly squeezed juice. Juice vendors have popped up around most campuses and they give a wide range of options. Pick a favourite fruit or a quirky combination if you're feeling it. That being said, remind him to not add sugar to the juice or at least ask for a very specific amount to avoid consuming a ton of sugar.

For those of you who survive on

caffeine, ask the tong er mama to do the same. If you're having milk tea or coffee with milk, the 'milk' being used is usually entirely or partially condensed milk, which is already quite sweet. If you can't adjust to the taste immediately, reduce the amount slowly to initiate the process.

Cutting out sugar can be quite challenging and it is usually a lengthy, conscious process of elimination. Sugary drinks might be momentarily refreshing but it doesn't substitute water.

SNACK SMARTER

Samosas, singaras, fries and phuchka are amazing but unfortunately it isn't for the body. Most snacking options on campuses are fried and have pretty much no nutritional value. I stole this tip off my friend who was trying to lose his potbelly without working too hard on it and it's actually really clever. Instead of snacking on the bad stuff that taste good, why not snack on good stuff that still taste good? Ditch the 'bhajapora' for an apple or any other fruit you like. Throw one into your bag and take it with you or just get one from a vendor around campus. If you can't consume a snack that's not all spiced up, you can also try finding a vendor who sells fruit chaats and make your own bhorta or chaat. Another simple way to snack is to carry some nuts, dates, and dry fruits (without

sugar) to munch on while on campus.

HAVE MEALS INSTEAD OF MULTIPLE SNACKS

Due to time constraints, we often end up just taking multiple snack breaks or just snacking while rushing from one class to another. While this is convenient, it often ends up amounting to consumptions of a lot of junk food. Opting for a proper, wholesome meal before a long stretch of classes might be a better option. Having a filling meal, that is light and balanced, can help curb the tendency to grab unhealthy food while on a time limit. While doing so,

make the conscious choice to ditch oily food like tehari/biriyani and have some naan instead. If you can't live without rice, try eating the plain variety. Grilled chicken is a better option than fried or curry varieties and load up on vegetables. Making other similar adjustments along the way will help improve how you eat.

STAY HYDRATED

It's easy to forget to drink water while juggling an academic life and a social life on campus. Carrying your own water bottle is one way to ensure you're getting enough fluids in your system. The benefits? You'll feel more energetic and hungry less frequently. It keeps you feeling peppy longer and better. Once again, if

plain old water gets too boring, there are many recipes available online for adding flavour water which can be made with herbs and fruits. These can add some benefits and help ensure you keep sipping all day.

FIND YOUR MOTIVATION

This is the most important factor in this process. Do your research, outline your goals. It becomes impossible to stay on track unless you keep yourself motivated and the best way to find your motivation is to truly understand why you'd want to eat healthy on campus. For me, not feeling my best and dragging myself through the day while feeling sluggish was the force behind my choice to consciously pick better ways to eat. I've failed many times and there are always cheat days but this goes beyond any kind of goals regarding the outer appearance. Health and overall wellbeing are interconnected and the importance of looking after our bodies cannot be stressed enough.

Some people find it easier to maintain a strict diet that they commit to but for me, managing around that has always been hard. Committing to making better choices consciously can be a way to get the ball rolling and your body ready to perhaps make bigger decisions regarding health and wellness in the future. There is no specific way to do this but remember to listen to your body and commit to what is best for you.

Nooha Sabanta Maula is an Anthropology major whose anthropologising has made her confused about life. Send her your thoughts to noohamaula@gmail.com

