
Maintaining a Healthy and Gluten-Free Diet While in College

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Disclaimer: The content in this article is for general health information only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Although keeping a gluten-free diet at college can seem like a good bit of work on its own, it's also important to maintain a healthy and balanced diet so that you can feel your best.

Maintaining a healthy diet:

For all of us with celiac disease, a healthy diet must be gluten free. To feel your best at college, load up on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and healthy fats, and avoid high-fat, high-sugar and processed foods that can slow you down. Many colleges have implemented programs to guide students on healthy choices. At my school, for instance, there are certain stations in dining halls and cafes marked with a logo, indicating that the option is a healthy choice. If you want further help with your diet, seek out a registered dietitian. Your campus health center might have staff dedicated to healthy eating and as well as dietitians on staff.



The healthy eating logo from Cornell Dining

Planning ahead:

Know the options you will have no matter where you go. Thinking about where you might be on campus, what is open, and what types of foods are in different venues will help you determine what choices will be best. By now, you have probably figured out which dining halls and cafes on campus you can rely on for gluten-free food. Now, it's time to think ahead about which of those also have healthy options. Looking for those healthy eating logos that your school might have or being aware of what cafes have a wide range of options can help you to plan ahead for a balanced meal. Also be prepared for the situation where you cannot find anything gluten free. Keeping trail mix, fruit and vegetables that are easy to transport, or even a gluten-free protein bar with you will help ensure that you are not stranded without options. This is especially important in college when you have long days or long nights, and your schedule is not as standard as it was at home.

Supplementing:

If your school has everything you need to maintain a gluten-free, healthy diet, this section might not apply to you. However, many schools are still coming up with options for students with celiac disease, meaning you will not necessarily find everything you need on campus. Supplementing your campus options with gluten-free foods from online vendors or larger stores off campus can be beneficial. It also can ensure that you are enjoying your meals by allowing you to have items on hand that you like, such as a certain brand of whole grain bread or cereal. If you are worried about covering the cost of both the dining plan and the additional gluten-free food expenses, contact your dining coordinators or student disabilities office. Often, schools are willing to work out a cost or a dining plan that is more appropriate for you if they are not able to provide all the foods you need.



With some additional thought and time, you will be able to keep a balanced, healthy and gluten-free diet so you can perform at your best at college!

I am proud to have written three different columns for the CSG newsletter over the past 6 years. I write seeking your support as I take on the challenge of running the Boston Marathon. When the bombs hit last year, I vowed to run it. As someone with celiac disease, I am proud to run and prove that celiac disease has not hindered me in achieving my goals. Thank you in advance for your support. No encouraging word or donation is too small! Go to www.crowdrise.com and search for me, Hannah Swartz.

