Don’t Touch that Button!
How to Avoid the Vending Machine
By Amanda Cortese

It is 2:30 in the afternoon; you just got out of your dreadfully boring History Gen-Ed class and your running to the library to go print out your assignment that is due in 20 minutes when you pass the antagonizing vending machine. You can hear your stomach rumbling and know that dinner is at least five hours away (if you're lucky). As you stare reluctantly at the brightly colored packages, the angel on your right shoulder is telling you to keep walking and find some fruit, while the devil on your left shoulder is telling you that your stomach is growling so grabs some chips! You shuffle through your backpack, pull out your Ucard and quickly swipe it. The chips come falling to the bottom of the machine, you stick your hand in, grab the chips, and continue on your journey to the WEB Du Bois Library.

Vending machines are a temptation to many students on campus because of the busy schedules and the convenience of easily swiping a Ucard to pay for food. With 6,460,000 vending machines across the United States raking in a revenue of $4,350,000, it is clear that many fall to the temptation of the snacks and drinks in the vending machine.1 Unfortunately, vending machines rarely offer nutritious snacks but rather high calorie snacks that are low in nutrients. This deadly combination can be dangerous to students that depend on vending machines too often. Learning to avoid vending machines can be important in order to maintain a healthy diet. Here are some tips!

Plan Ahead

The key to avoiding vending machines is thinking ahead and planning for your day. Planning is not always the easiest task, especially if you are forced to plan before leaving for an 8AM class. However, taking just 5 minutes to think about when you will be able to eat and packing healthy snacks such as nuts, fruits, veggie sticks, or yogurt would be highly beneficial to your diet. If you have these healthy snacks right in your backpack, you will be less tempted to go to the vending machine.
Don’t Skip Meals

Another way to avoid unhealthy snacking is to avoid skipping meals. As you get closer and closer to finals, term papers, and semester long projects being due, it is likely that your schedule will become even more irregular. These irregular schedules often lead to students eating at strange times or skipping important meals. While completing school work is important, it is even more essential to make sure that you give yourself time to eat. If you are not eating, your immune system will be compromised and the last thing anyone needs during finals week is the flu.

An easy solution to meal skipping is keeping quick breakfast items in your room that are easy to prepare. For example, you could easily grab a yogurt and pour some granola in and be on your way to class. For lunch if you do not have enough time to go to the dining hall, you could go and get a sandwich and bring it with you. For dinner, it might be best to go to the dining hall and give your brain a break for 30 minutes. However, if this is impossible, dining halls around campus offer “grab-and-go” meals. If you are eating three meals a day, the need to impulsively get snacks from the vending machine will diminish.

Stop the Stress Eating

People often crave unhealthy foods when they are stressed and feel a sense of relief through food. As a student, I am sure you are stressed on a daily basis, however it is important to learn how to deal with this stress without the use of unhealthy foods. This can be difficult when you are at the library or in your dorm studying and see the many vending machines. Avoid the vending machines as well as stress eating by determining other ways that help you feel less stressed. Take a five minutes break and listen to your favorite song, rather than eating unhealthy snacks, especially if you are not even hungry. Chewing gum while studying may help satisfy you as well. College is the time to learn how to deal with high stress situations because future work situations could potentially be even more stressful. Developing healthy eating habits and stress coping skills will be highly beneficial for maintain a healthy lifestyle.
Make the Best Choice

Sometimes avoiding the vending machine is just impossible. You forgot that banana you were planning to eat on your desk this morning and you do not have time to get to the dining hall, so what should you choose from the vending machine? Some vending machines around campus have fruits cups. Although fresh fruit is better, fruit cups have more nutritional value than chips. Another option could be nuts. You need to be careful of sodium, but this choice provides some protein! If you need a drink from the vending machine, avoid the soda and go for water. It will quench your thirst and water is calorie and sugar free.

So let’s recap:

- Plan ahead
- Pack snacks
- Do not skip meals
- Avoid stress eating
- Go for nuts or a fruit cup if you NEED the vending machine
- Avoid soda or other sugar sweetened beverages
- Choose water

Follow these simple concepts and you will be on your way to being a healthier college student!

References

