



# Wellness Brief: The Effects of Nutritional Choices on the BMI Classifications of First Year Students

BMI Classification*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Underweight (<18.50)	4%	4%	4%	5%	6%
Normal (18.50-24.99)	73%	74%	69%	69%	71%
Overweight (≥25.00)	18%	16%	21%	19%	17%
Obese (≥30.00)	6%	7%	6%	7%	6%

\*(BMI= 70 kg/ (1.75 m<sup>2</sup>) = 70/3.06 = 22.9, World Health Organization)

Body Mass Index Maintaining a healthy diet is integral to sustaining a healthy weight. Adults who consume at least 2 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables per day are at a lower risk for developing chronic diseases and more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Data from the Wellness Resource Center Wellness Surveys (2008-2012) assessed the BMI classifications and health behaviors of first year students at the University of Missouri. Data collected from the surveys show that a significant amount of first year students are not maintaining a healthy diet. The data has consistently showed that 42-47% of MU freshmen consume one or fewer servings of vegetables per day and 46-50% consumer one or fewer servings of fruit per day. Additionally, students are eating multiple servings of high fat and high sugar per day - the most recent data showing 64% of first year students consuming 2 or more servings of high fat per day and 44% of first year students consuming 2 or more servings of high sugar per day. Consequently, over one quarter of first year MU students are outside of the “normal” Body Mass Index (BMI) classification. According to the most recent Wellness Survey data, 23% of MU first year students are either overweight or obese.

Health Behavior	2008	2009	2010
1 or fewer servings of fruit per day	50%	48%	46%
1 or fewer servings of vegetables per day	45%	47%	42%
2 or more servings of high fat per day	63%	64%	64%
2 or more servings of high sugar per day	49%	46%	44%

## Summary

As the data suggests, low daily consumption of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and high daily consumption of high fats and high sugars may impact the 23% of MU first year students in the overweight or obese BMI classifications. The Wellness Survey data shows that first year MU students have consistently consumed large amounts of high fats and high sugars per day. In order to aid students in making healthier choices, it may be beneficial to target the areas where first year students consume most of their meals, such as the dining halls, for methods on how to make the most nutritional selections. Universities should also work to help students understand how to make healthy food choices. Campuses need to continue to educate students, first year students in particular, on healthy eating suggestions, body positivity, and strategies to maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to encourage students to engage in healthy behaviors during the course of their college career.

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