Many students complain of weight gain during their first year at college. It’s been referred to as “the freshmen fifteen” and is a commonly used expression in the United States. However, there are ways to stay healthy as you transition to college-life. Here are some reasons college students may gain weight, as well as some strategies to address them:

**Eating Extra at Dining Halls**
The variety of buffet-style dining can be tempting; however, finding nutritious options is very possible. Learn what you need for a balanced meal and avoid seconds of high-calorie items. Eat slowly and sip water with your meals. Many times the dining hall is a gathering place for social time; instead of staying and continuing to eat, suggest the conversation continue outside the dining area or take an after-dinner stroll with friends.

**Skipping Meals**
If you skip a meal due to rushing through your day, your chances of overeating later are greater. Try to eat three meals a day to keep your energy level up. Also, try keeping snacks with you to hold you over between meals.

**Snacking While Studying**
Snacking is important to maintain your energy level; however, avoid munching while you hit the books. Instead, take breaks for snacking and refreshing your mind.

**Late Nights**
Extra waking hours translate to greater hunger as well as excessive snacking, so make sure you are getting the proper amount of rest. If you do need a late night, try chewing gum or sipping water to stay alert rather than snacking.

**Lack of Exercise**
Remember to get regular exercise by walking, swimming, taking a STAC class, or weight lifting at the student gym. Getting 30-45 minutes of moderate exercise three to four times a week can be helpful in maintaining a healthy weight.

**Not Staying Hydrated**
Make sure you are getting enough water and not quenching your thirst with high-calorie drinks. Sometimes when we feel hungry, what our body really needs is hydration.

If you’re worried about weight gain, check your weight occasionally and make note of any trends. If you notice an increase over several weeks, or if you notice you are eating to cope with stress of other emotions, consider making an appointment with a counselor. Keep in mind that weight gain can be perfectly normal and fluctuates over time. You know your body better than anyone else, so make sure you are doing all you can to keep it healthy!