🥛 Nutrition Stress Busters 🍎

As we get busy and stressed, we tend to make poor nutritional choices that can actually increase our stress levels and cause other problems. Here are ten tips for getting good nutrition and maintaining a more healthy diet, even under stress. After a few weeks, they'll become habit and you won't even have to think about good nutrition. And your body—not to mention your stress level—will feel the difference!

Eat Breakfast: You may rationalize that you're not hungry yet, that you don't have time, that lunch will come soon enough, that you need to lose weight anyway, or that the milk in the latte you pick up on the way is all the good nutrition you need. Skipping breakfast makes it harder to maintain stable blood sugar levels and effective concentration during your busy morning; you need it

Opt For Green Tea: If you're a coffee junkie, you may not realize the effects caffeine has on your system. However, you can reduce your stress levels and improve your mental performance throughout the day if you gradually wean yourself off of large amounts of caffeine. A relatively easy and healthy way to do that is to replace coffee with decaffeinated green tea, which has a soothing taste and the added benefit of loads of antioxidants.

Try Sparkling Juice or Perrier: If you're a cola drinker, you're probably experiencing the same health consequences from caffeine that coffee drinkers experience. A more healthful alternative is sparkling fruit juice or water. You'll still be getting a refreshing treat, but you'll be adding water to your system, rather than detracting it (caffeine saps your system of water, so drinking it is akin to *un*-drinking water!), and you'll be avoiding other caffeine-related side effects.

Carry a Snack: Having some protein-rich, healthful snacks in your backpack, gym bag, or purse can help you avoid blood sugar level dips and accompanying mood swings and fatigue. Trail mix, granola bars, and certain energy bars all contain good nutrition. Along these lines, you should always have water handy, as it's so vital to health and proper physical functioning.

Healthy Munches: If you find that you absently munch when you're stressed, or have a pattern of snacking at certain times in the day or week, you can replace chips, cheese puffs and other less-healthy munchies with carrot sticks, fruit slices, celery sticks, sunflower seeds or other more healthy choices.

Avoid Sugary Foods: High sugar food causes your body to alter its serotonin levels in the brain and along with the stress hormone, cortisol, and cause weight gain. Instead of sweets like cookies and candy bars, grab a piece of fruit, a whole grain sandwich or a fiber-rich granola bar.

No Caffeine After 2pm: Since caffeine has a half-life in your body of at least 6 hours, caffeine you ingest with dinner can interfere with your sleep at night.

Banish the Bad Stuff: It's easier to avoid sugary, fatty, and otherwise unhealthy foods if they're not in your dorm room, practically begging you to eat them! This may sound like a no-brainer (yet it's sometimes harder to do than you'd expect), but you should go through your room and throw out most of the foods that your body can't use in a healthy way.   That way you'll be forced to snack on healthy food when you're stressed.

Stock Your Room With Healthy Fare: Even more important than getting the non-nutritious stuff out of your dorm room, is getting healthy food *in*! Make a list of healthy snacks and shop for these once a week. That way you know you'll have what you want when you need it and you won't be tempted to raid the vending machines.

Tension Tamers: Adopting stress reducing techniques should also reduce your stress-induced cravings for unhealthy or excessive food. Try yoga, martial arts, journaling, and laugher to calm down and turn off your body's stress response.

These tips were taken from www.stressabout.com and adapted for college students.