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THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING HABITS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. This thesis examines the importance of fostering a culture of healthy eating among university students, the effects of balanced nutrition on physiological functioning, and the health-related problems associated with unhealthy dietary habits. It also presents recommendations aimed at promoting the development of healthy eating practices among young people.

Keywords: healthy eating, university students, health, vitamins, micronutrients, prevention, balanced nutrition, food hygiene.

Introduction. Protecting the health of young people and promoting healthy lifestyles are among the key public health priorities today. During university years, individuals are often exposed to substantial cognitive and physical demands. Changes in daily routines, academic workloads, and living conditions may adversely affect dietary habits. Therefore, fostering a culture of healthy eating among university students is of considerable importance for maintaining health and supporting overall well-being.

Main Body. Balanced nutrition helps meet the body's requirements for energy and essential nutrients. Proteins play a crucial role in the structural composition and repair of cells and tissues, while fats serve as an energy source and are essential components of cell membranes. Carbohydrates provide a major source of energy for the body. Vitamins and minerals are involved in numerous physiological processes and contribute to the normal functioning of the human organism.Among university students, unhealthy dietary practices may include skipping breakfast, irregular meal patterns, excessive consumption of convenience and fast foods, frequent intake of sugar-sweetened beverages, and inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables. Such habits may result in an imbalanced diet and, over time, adversely affect health.

To promote healthy eating habits, students are advised to consume a varied and balanced diet that includes vegetables and fruits, whole-grain products, protein-rich foods, and appropriate amounts of healthy fats. Adequate water intake, regular meal schedules, and careful consideration of the nutritional composition of food products are also important components of a healthy dietary pattern.

At higher medical education institutions, educational sessions, round-table discussions, health promotion campaigns, and practical dietary guidance can help improve students' knowledge of healthy nutrition. Furthermore, it is particularly important for future physicians to adopt healthy lifestyle practices themselves, as their personal commitment to health promotion can strengthen their ability to provide

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effective preventive counselling to patients and the wider population in their future professional careers.

Conclusion. In conclusion, healthy eating is an essential factor in supporting university students' physical health, well-being, and daily functioning. Establishing appropriate dietary habits during university years provides a foundation for maintaining a healthy lifestyle throughout adulthood. Therefore, educational institutions should strengthen health education initiatives related to food hygiene and nutrition and promote greater awareness of healthy eating practices among young people.

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