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PREVALENT DISEASES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: ETIOLOGY, CURRENT ISSUES, AND PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT: This article examines common diseases among university students, including their etiology, risk factors, and prevention measures. The study identified that specific lifestyle aspects of students—such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, chronic stress, and sleep disruption—lead to the development of various somatic and psychological disorders.

Furthermore, gastrointestinal disorders, visual impairment, nervous system disorders, and musculoskeletal issues were analyzed as the most prevalent conditions among students. Their underlying causes and developmental mechanisms are explained on a scientific basis.

According to the research findings, developing a healthy lifestyle, ensuring proper nutrition, engaging in regular physical activity, and reducing stress factors play a critical role in preserving students' health.

Keywords: Student health, somatic diseases, risk factors, stress, physical inactivity, preventive measures, healthy lifestyle.

ntroduction

Currently, health issues among university students are acquiring urgent significance not only on a national level but globally. Young people studying in higher education institutions represent a crucial social layer that defines the intellectual potential of society. Therefore, preserving and strengthening their health requires special attention in both medical and social fields. The fast pace of modern life, increasing academic workload, and lifestyle changes exert a noticeable impact on students' bodies. Specific aspects of students' lifestyle—such as irregular eating habits, high consumption of fast food, low physical activity (hypodynamia), prolonged use of computers and mobile devices, and sleep routine disruptions—act as primary factors leading to various diseases. Additionally, chronic stress associated with examinations, academic pressure, and social issues negatively affects students' mental and somatic health.

Observations conducted in recent years indicate that gastrointestinal disorders (particularly gastritis and functional dyspepsia), visual decline (myopia), nervous system disorders (neurosis, depressive states), and musculoskeletal diseases (scoliosis, osteochondrosis) are widespread among students. Excessive use of digital technologies leads to eye strain and vision degradation, posing a serious threat to youth health. The student period is a key phase in human life during which functional body systems actively take shape and strengthen. Failing to adhere to a healthy lifestyle during this time increases the future risk of developing chronic diseases.

Consequently, conducting in-depth research into the etiology and risk factors of diseases among students and formulating effective preventive measures has significant scientific and practical value. The objective of this article is to comprehensively study common diseases among students, identify their etiologic factors and primary risk indicators, and substantiate effective preventive measures by promoting a healthy lifestyle.

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Relevance

Youth health, particularly student health, serves as one of the key pillars ensuring the sustainable development of society. Today, examining and improving the health status of students in higher education is viewed not only as a medical issue but also as a socio-hygienic challenge, as this demographic will play a vital role in future societal development as qualified specialists.

In recent years, a trend toward worsening health indicators, rising functional disorders, and the 'rejuvenation' of certain diseases among students has been observed. This situation stems from numerous internal and external factors, necessitating a systematic study. The intensification of the educational process, increased mental load, and unbalanced daily routines negatively affect the body's adaptive mechanisms. Moreover, delayed detection of diseases at early stages and insufficient preventive medical examinations further exacerbate the issue. In many cases, conditions remain asymptomatic or ignored, thereby elevating the risk of chronic progression. This leads not only to health deterioration but also complicates treatment processes. Furthermore, factors such as an underdeveloped health culture, lack of preventive knowledge, and negligence toward personal health contribute significantly to the prevalence of diseases.

From this perspective, conducting a detailed analysis of the etiologic characteristics of diseases among students, identifying risk factors, and establishing effective preventive strategies represents an urgent scientific and practical task. The relevance of this study is underscored by the need to comprehensively evaluate student health, facilitate early diagnosis, and refine preventive measures.

Materials and Methods

This study aimed to identify common diseases among students, their etiological factors and risk factors, and was conducted during the first months of 2026. An analytical research method was chosen as the research design. 120 students studying at a higher education institution were recruited as the research material. Participants were selected based on a simple random selection method. Students aged 18–25 years, studying in different faculties and courses, were included in the study. Individuals with severe chronic diseases were excluded from the study. Several methods were used to collect data:

First, a specially developed structured anonymous questionnaire was used as a sociological method. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and included the following blocks:

- demographic data (age, gender, course);
- eating habits (daily diet, fast food consumption);
- physical activity level (frequency of sports per week);
- sleep pattern (duration and quality of daily sleep);
- psychoemotional state (stress level, fatigue);
- health complaints (stomach pain, headache, decreased vision, etc.).

Secondly, the complaints and self-assessment results reported by students were analyzed based on a clinical-epidemiological approach. In some cases, student medical records and dispensary observation data (if available) were summarized.

Thirdly, as an analytical method, domestic and foreign scientific literature, including articles, scientific journals, and reports of health care organizations, were studied and analyzed.

Fourthly, statistical methods were used to process the data obtained. In particular, the results were summarized using descriptive statistical methods (mean value, percentages). The principles of bioethics were fully observed during the study: all participants participated in the study voluntarily, the purpose of the study was explained to them, and the confidentiality of personal data was ensured.

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Results and discussion

The data of 120 students who participated in the study were analyzed. 58.3% (n=70) of the participants were women, 41.7% (n=50) were men. The average age of the students was 20.8 ± 1.9 years.

According to the results of the survey, it was found that the level of adherence to a healthy lifestyle among students was insufficient. In particular, 64.2% of the respondents reported eating disorders, and 52.5% reported regular consumption of fast food. Only 28.3% of students reported eating three meals a day. Analysis of the level of physical activity showed that 57.5% of the students do sports less than once a week or do not do them at all. Only 22.5% of the respondents noted that they regularly engage in physical exercise. The results related to sleep patterns were also noteworthy. It was found that 61.7% of students slept less than 6 hours a day, which indicates sleep deprivation. In addition, 48.3% of students reported poor sleep quality. As a result of the assessment of the psycho-emotional state, it was found that 68.3% of respondents had moderate and high levels of stress. 35% of them reported frequent fatigue and irritability.

The analysis of health complaints showed the following results:

62.5% of students had problems with the gastrointestinal system (stomach pain, gastritis symptoms); 71.7% of respondents had decreased vision or eye fatigue; 54.2% of students had headaches and neurological complaints; 46.7% of participants had problems with the spine (pain, signs of scoliosis). The results showed that somatic and functional disorders were widespread among students. In particular, problems with the visual organs and diseases of the gastrointestinal system took the leading place.

The results of the study showed that health problems are widespread among students. When the results were compared with the data presented in modern scientific literature, the general trends were similar. In particular, the problems associated with malnutrition and the gastrointestinal system identified in our study were also noted in reports published by the World Health Organization. According to this organization, malnutrition and the consumption of fast food among young people are one of the main factors in the development of gastrointestinal diseases. Also, studies published in the Journal of American College Health noted a high incidence of eating disorders and dyspeptic complaints among students. Our results also indicate that these problems were observed in a large part of the respondents, which is consistent with these scientific conclusions. The results related to decreased vision were also consistent with international scientific studies. Studies published in the Ophthalmology Journal and Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science have identified prolonged use of digital devices as a major risk factor for the development of myopia. The high rates identified in our study support these scientific views. The results regarding psychoemotional state are consistent with studies published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, which showed a high prevalence of stress and depressive states among students. Our study also found that a large proportion of respondents had moderate to high levels of stress. In addition, low physical activity and its impact on health have been widely covered in studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to these sources, physical inactivity plays an important role in the development of musculoskeletal diseases. The problems with the spine identified in our study once again confirm these conclusions. Overall, the results are consistent with data from the World Health Organization, the Journal of American College Health, and other reputable scientific journals, indicating that health problems among students are multifactorial in nature and are based on lifestyle-related risk factors.

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Conclusion.

The results of this study showed that health problems are widespread among students and that lifestyle factors play a decisive role in their formation. Based on the data obtained, it was found that malnutrition, low physical activity, sleep disorders, and chronic psycho-emotional stress are widespread among students. These factors, in turn, create the basis for the development of various somatic and functional diseases. The analysis showed that diseases of the gastrointestinal system, decreased vision, disorders of the nervous system, and problems of the musculoskeletal system occupy a leading position among students. In particular, the high proportion of problems with the organs of vision is directly related to the excessive use of modern digital technologies. At the same time, it was found that the widespread prevalence of gastrointestinal diseases is closely related to unhealthy eating habits and disruption of the daily routine.

The results of the study indicate the need for a comprehensive approach to the issue of maintaining and strengthening students' health. In particular, it is important to introduce systematic programs aimed at forming a healthy lifestyle in higher educational institutions, organize regular preventive medical examinations, and increase the health literacy of students. In addition, encouraging physical activity, widely promoting the principles of proper nutrition, and developing psychological support services are effective measures to improve student health. There is also an opportunity to reduce the complications of diseases among students through early diagnosis and timely identification of risk factors. This, along with reducing the burden on the healthcare system, will improve the quality of life of young people.

In conclusion, the development and implementation of scientifically based preventive measures aimed at protecting student health is one of the urgent tasks of today. Systematic work in this direction will not only improve student health, but also strengthen the intellectual and labor potential of society.

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