

# From the Nutritionist

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## Stress Less!

With the semester drawing to a close, it's a busy time on campus. To help the campus community relieve end-of-semester stress, several campus groups are once again coming together to host PAWS for Stress Relief on May 9 & 10, from 10 am to 4 pm in the Corey Union Function Room.

PAWS activities, like spending time with animals, doing crafts, and getting a massage, can be very helpful in decreasing stress. However, eating habits can have a major effect as well. Here are some nutrition tips that can help to minimize feelings of stress and keep your mind working at its best:

- **Choose a balanced diet** – This isn't the time to completely overhaul your eating habits, and it's definitely not a good idea to go on a crash diet when you're stressed (or any time, really!) as cutting calories too much can increase stress and anxiety. Instead, aim to eat from all five food groups each day – whole grains, vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and dairy. This will help you get the nutrients your body and mind need so you can function at your best.
- **Limit sugar** – A high intake of simple sugars and refined carbohydrates can cause your blood sugar to fluctuate more than usual. You'll get energy initially, but you might crash and end up more fatigued and craving more sweets. Choose whole grains, vegetables and fruits for healthful sources of carbohydrate. If you do want something sweet, balance it with healthy foods.
- **Eat breakfast** – Start the day right with a healthy breakfast which includes carbohydrates (like whole grain toast, granola, or fruit) for energy, and protein (like eggs or Greek yogurt) to keep you feeling fueled for hours. A breakfast that includes protein may help keep blood sugar more stable and decrease feelings of stress.
- **Don't skip meals** – Eating every 3-5 hours helps keep your body fueled and your blood sugar stable. Small, frequent meals and snacks can help you feel more energized so you can focus on the task at hand instead of hunger pangs that can result from skipping meals.
- **Cut down on caffeine** – Although caffeine is known for making your mind alert, it also can cause a number of side effects, including increased heart rate, anxiety, feelings of stress, and difficulty sleeping – not what you need during final exams! Pay attention to the caffeine you consume from all sources, like coffee, tea, soda, energy drinks, and chocolate.
- **Stay hydrated** – Dehydration can increase feelings of stress, impact academic performance, and have negative effects on your entire body. Be sure to drink plenty of water and non-caffeinated drinks.

*Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York state-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.*