

## Comparison of Diet Quality among College Students with and without a Disability

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**Objectives:** Research suggests that having a disability is linked to increased risk of obesity and lower diet quality, however, little is known about the diet quality of college students with a disability compared to their peers without a disability.

**Methods:** Data were collected from an ongoing college health survey conducted at a mid-size, northeastern university between 2008-2015 [n=4242; 72.9% female]. Disability was self-reported via 1-item as part of an online questionnaire. Three-day food records were analyzed via nutrient analysis software (Diet Analysis Plus); intake of fiber, calcium, potassium, and saturated fat were utilized to assess diet quality. For each nutrient, students were given a score of 1-5 according to their quintile of intake (1= lowest intake for fiber, calcium, potassium; highest intake saturated fat) and scores were added together; scores ranged 5-20. Mean diet scores ( $\pm$ SE) were compared via ANCOVA for students with and without disabilities; sex, age, BMI, total kcalories, academic major, and academic semester served as covariates.

**Results:** Ten percent (10.1%) of students reported having a disability. Overweight (BMI<sup>3</sup>25) prevalence was higher among students with a disability (29.6 vs. 24.6%,  $p < .05$ ). Diet scores for students with and without disability did not differ ( $12.00 \pm .05$  vs.  $11.97 \pm .15$ ,  $p = .83$ ).

**Conclusions:** Data did not show differences in diet scores between college students with and without disability once adjusted for potential confounding variables. Further research should examine additional factors that influence diet quality and food access among college students with disability.