

College days -- more sedentary days

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During college years, students become more sedentary and as their physical activity levels decrease, Body Mass Index and weight increase.

"Basically, students came out of college significantly less active and heavier compared to the start of their freshman year," said Jeanne Johnston, assistant professor in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. "But it is a gradual process."

She and her colleagues conducted a survey that asked a sample population of undergraduate students questions about physical activity. No matter what their year, college students had a dramatic decrease in moderate activity -- an activity in which one's breathing rate and [heart rate](#) goes up -- and walking.

As students get older, Johnston said, they walk less and uses buses to go to one side of the campus to another. Her study found a significant decrease in the number of minutes walked per week between freshmen and all other classes. Freshmen spent 684 minutes walking each week, for example, while seniors spent 436 minutes walking. Other significant differences between freshmen and seniors were found in moderate physical activity, vigorous physical activity, BMI and time spent sitting.

The reason for [weight gain](#) could be because college is such a tremendous transition period.

"It is the first time students are responsible for leading a [healthy lifestyle](#)," Johnston said. "It is the first time they have to manage their time and

make time to exercise. It is a critical point in their lives and colleges and universities can help influence them to make healthy choices by providing them with different programs and choices."

Students can make healthy lifestyle changes by creating distinct plans that include enjoyable daily activities, Johnston said.

Provided by Indiana University

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