

Unhealthy Behaviors and the Relationship to Body Mass Index (BMI) in College Students

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Purpose: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between a variety of unhealthy behaviors and BMI in male and female college students. **Methods:** During the Spring and Fall 2011, and Spring 2012 semesters 693 students completed the Student Health Assessment Project (SHAP). This cross-sectional self-administered survey included questions related to a variety of healthy and unhealthy behaviors. Subjects' height and body weight were measured to calculate BMI by trained researchers using a standard protocol in a private setting. **Results:** Significant associations were found between unhealthy BMI ($>25\text{kg/m}^2$) and selected unhealthy behaviors. Associations between BMI and

Unhealthy Behaviors

Behaviors	Males and Females	Females n=448	Males n=244
Smoking	$\chi^2 = 4.484(1)$ $p = 0.034^*$	$\chi^2 = 5.057(1)$ $p = 0.025^*$	$\chi^2 = 0.165(1)$ $p = 0.685$
Binge Drinking	$\chi^2 = 0.004(1)$ $p = 0.950$	$\chi^2 = 0.031(1)$ $p = 0.861$	$\chi^2 = 0.430(1)$ $p = 0.512$
Inadequate PA	$\chi^2 = 0.340(1)$ $p = 0.560$	$\chi^2 = 0.085(1)$ $p = 0.771$	$\chi^2 = 0.527(1)$ $p = 0.468$
Over Eating	$\chi^2 = 0.992(1)$ $p = 0.319$	$\chi^2 = 3.97(1)$ $p = 0.046^*$	$\chi^2 = 4.56(1)$ $p = 0.033^*$
Inadequate Sleep	$\chi^2 = 1.093(1)$ $p = 0.296$	$\chi^2 = 2.434(1)$ $p = 0.119$	$\chi^2 = 0.297(1)$ $p = 0.586$

* $p < 0.05$

Conclusion: For the total sample of males and females, a statistically significant association was found between elevated BMI and smoking. Among females, there were statistically significant associations between elevated BMI and smoking, as well as elevated BMI and over eating. Among males, there was a statistically significant association between elevated BMI and over eating. Identifying potential behaviors and gender differences to elevated BMI values may provide appropriate avenues for wellness programming efforts geared toward college students.