

Impact of Meal Planning on Physical Health and Functional Ability

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that unhealthy nutritional habits as well as poor dietary choices may increase one's risk of developing hypertension, overweight/obesity, and inflammation which can lead to comorbidities, diseases states or even death. Planning your meals serves a wide purpose that together with nutrition aids in maintaining a healthy body system. Meal planning has been utilized by the individuals in the exercise world to assist in receiving the valuable nutrients needed to help build and maintain a healthy body. However, the curiosity in understanding whether meal planning may impact the functional status of the individuals who do not consistently exercise is unknown. **Purpose:** The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between physical health related to functional strength and mobility of the body and meal planning. **Methods:** An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Qualtrics online survey link was sent out to a group of college and/or university students (N=74). Participants answered questions from the Qualtrics Survey that included a validated measure, The Eating Behavior Patterns Questionnaire for Nutritional Habits (9 questions) and a researcher developed question (single question) on physical functionality were included. A low-score indicated healthy meal planning and excellent functional status. A high-score for either variable indicated little to no meal planning and a poor functional status. All data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (v. 27). **Results:** There were 74 participants in total; mean age of 24 ± 7.1 years and 78.2% were female. Physical health or one's functional strength and mobility of the body was significantly related to meal planning ($\rho = 0.495$, $p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Meal planning was significantly related to functional ability in college students. Few studies have focused on meal planning and functional ability therefore the current results represent new findings in this area and could be explored further.