

# CHOATE PUBLIC HEALTH



May 2023

# CONTENTS

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STANDARDIZED TESTING: NECESSARY OR HARMFUL	4
BREAKING THE STIGMA: ALL ABOUT CHOATE'S COUNSELING PROGRAM	6
THE NECESSITY OF WATER FOUNTAINS	8
HEALTH CENTER CONTROVERSY	10
THE IMPACT OF WARM TEMPERATURES ON SLEEP	12
SPRING: THE SEASON OF SPONTANEOUS ALLERGIES	14
THE KEY TO A FRUITFUL LIFE: HOW FRUIT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR HEALTH	16
PEER-TO-PEER ADVICE	18
DINING WITH DIETARY RESTRICTIONS	20
FUNDAMENTALS OF HEALTH: FOOD AND FITNESS	22

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# STANDARDIZED TESTING: N

By Shawn

Test scores in both standardized and class tests are perceived with unparalleled importance in the college admissions process, and despite holistic review and test-optional policies, the pressure remains high on students to perform well. Furthermore, at an institution like Choate, high-stakes testing, or at least testing with perceived high-stakes consequences, also places social pressure on students. At academically rigorous institutions, it is easy for test scores and grades to be attributed to one's self-worth. A 2021 study by Nancy Hamilton, a University of Kansas psychology professor, found that before exams, rather than thinking about the academic material to be studied, students often became preoccupied with their supposed life-changing consequences.<sup>1</sup> It is not an unfamiliar experience for many to worry that low test scores would affect college admissions, chances of getting a job, and lead to disappointment in the family.

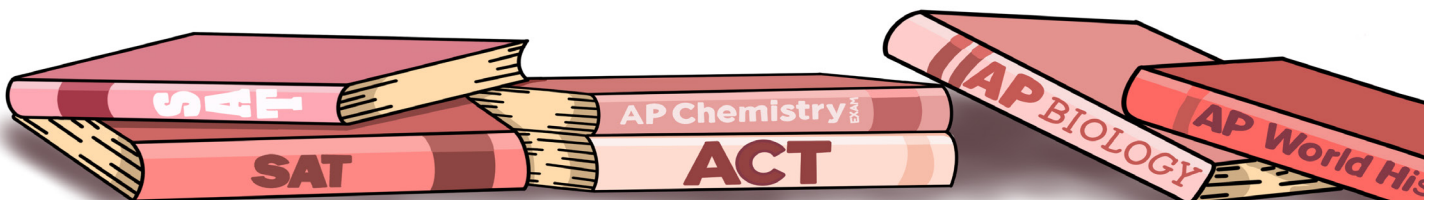
Additionally, several studies have found that testing, and standardized tests in particular, offer

an inaccurate and inequitable picture of students. A 2013 study, for instance, found that rather than demonstrating academic ability, SAT and ACT scores "are good proxies for the amount of wealth students are born into," often serving as a reflection of how much families are able to invest into test preparation resources and programs in the weeks and days leading up to the test, rather than students' general aptitude.<sup>2</sup> As opposed to standardized tests, regular high school tests and grades arguably offer a considerably better snapshot of students' academic performance. For instance, partial credit policies and factors in final grades such as class participation do a better job capturing the "soft skills" that are just as important in one's success as a student. At the end of the day, however, grades and test scores are simply a number or a letter, and are still far from representing the strengths, weaknesses, niches, and nuances of each individual student.

Regardless, testing, standardized or not, has shown itself to

have major health consequences for students. There are the immediate biological and physiological responses; a 2018 study found that during test-taking, cortisol levels, an indicator of stress, increased by an average of 15% and up to 35% for some. For others, cortisol levels dropped significantly, which researchers attributed to "shutting down" as a response to high pressure. Significant changes of more than 10% in cortisol, both positive and negative, were in turn associated with lower test scores equal to approximately 80 points lower on the SAT. There are also long-term effects associated with extended high-pressure environments.<sup>3</sup> Hamilton's 2021 study found that anxiety in the weeks and days leading up to exams were "correlated with poor health behaviors, including dysregulated sleep patterns and poor sleep quality." Hamilton further found that under these circumstances, students were regularly plagued by a host of problems, including caffeine overconsumption, smoking, unhealthy diets, and lack of

Graphic by Maddy Childs '26



# NECESSARY OR HARMFUL?

Yang '24

exercise, negatively impacting their overall wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> These phenomena are well-documented and regularly observed; however, most students don't need studies to prove to them the negative effects that test-induced stress can have on their bodies, and these are just the physical effects alone.

At rigorous institutions such as Choate, there exists further pressure among high-achieving students, as described in a 2011 study by Laura-Lee Kearns, a professor of education at St. Francis Xavier University. Kearns observed that when students who were typically successful in school and thought of themselves as academically advanced failed their state literacy test, they "experienced shock at test failure," triggering a feeling of disconnect and leading to an identity crisis that made them feel as though "they did not belong in courses they previously enjoyed, and even caused some of them to question their school class placement."<sup>4</sup> This is common in academically rigorous institutions, where students typically were among the top students at their previous schools.

Among Choate students, for instance, this phenomenon is frequently observed and described as "imposter syndrome," leading to a false sense of insecurity and feelings of self-doubt that fre-

quently take tolls upon mental health and wellbeing.

Inevitably, stress associated with testing is a vicious cycle; prolonged exposure to stress inhibits academic performance and success in tests, which leads to further stress and begins a destructive cycle. This quickly results in widespread burnout among students. Testing itself isn't necessarily harmful; it is imperative for students to learn how to manage stress and perform under pressure. Completely eliminating testing may actually prove itself to be counterproductive, as it would deny students opportunities to challenge themselves intellectually and develop healthy habits for managing stress.

At the end of the day, however, most of the problems associated with testing lay not in the act of testing itself, but in the manufactured power that is assigned to it. In the current education system, students tend to preoccupy themselves with obsessing over how a single test may affect their life path, rather than focusing on how to reasonably manage stress to perform well without worrying about future consequences. It is almost impossible to create a perfectly equitable education system, and testing has proven itself over time as an efficient and effective method of demonstrating academic merit, but the effects that the power assigned

to testing has had on student wellbeing and sanity are undeniable.

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# BREAKING THE STIGMA CHOATE'S COUNSELING

By Kay

Counseling is a resource that many are familiar with, yet often remains shrouded in silence. At Choate, it is no surprise that students are constantly stressed, falling into a melting pot of academic and personal hardships. In an environment where high performance is expected, students are often hesitant to seek help. However, Choate's counseling program offers a safe and effective solution.

The program consists of four counselors, one of which is an advisor to the Bystander Education Program, another to the Assessment Team, as well as one who does programming at McCook. Oftentimes, the counselors participate in advising wellness workshops and group activities on campus.

Mrs. Raynetta Gibbs, Director of Counseling, says, "We have a range of why students come to see us. For example, a student might say, I had a really bad grade on my test, and I really just need to vent to someone. Another might say, I am suffering from depression and anxiety and really need some help and some tools and coping mechanisms." Ms.

Gibbs understands the diverse needs of Choate's student body. She emphasizes the importance of reducing the stigma around seeking mental health support, encouraging all students to take advantage of counseling.

Many students may feel apprehensive about seeking help, fearing that their personal information may be disclosed to parents, guardians, advisers, or deans. However, Ms. Gibbs highlights, "We don't work as much with parents. Here in a counseling office, you all are our clients [...], and there are times when a student is really struggling, and of course, the student will know first that we would like to contact parents. But more often than not, we're just working exclusively with students here at Choate."

Ms. Gibbs also describes her six years as a Choate counselor and how students have ever-changing needs. She says, "When I got here, there were two counselors that had been here for 30 plus years, and so, six years ago, when I was added to the team, we've grown a little bit more. I think we have learned that this campus is a little differ-

ent than 35 years ago. We have to move with the changes and transition into a space where we're not only behind closed doors here and in the counseling office and that we need to be more out in the community. Students need to see us. We need to create new and different ways in which we can reach out to students."

Looking ahead, Ms. Gibbs aspires to be a part of a counseling office that can become more adaptable and accessible. She says, "My goal is to be a counseling office that is no longer in the office, it's out there in dorm rooms, common rooms, creating new ideas and how we can help students."

Ultimately, her advice to students hesitant to seek help is, "We don't bite. You can come once, two times, the rest of the year, you could come every other week, every week. Or you can say I just want a half an hour to kind of connect. Regardless, we would like you to come in and just talk about it."

Choate's counseling program is a vital resource for students facing a variety of chal-

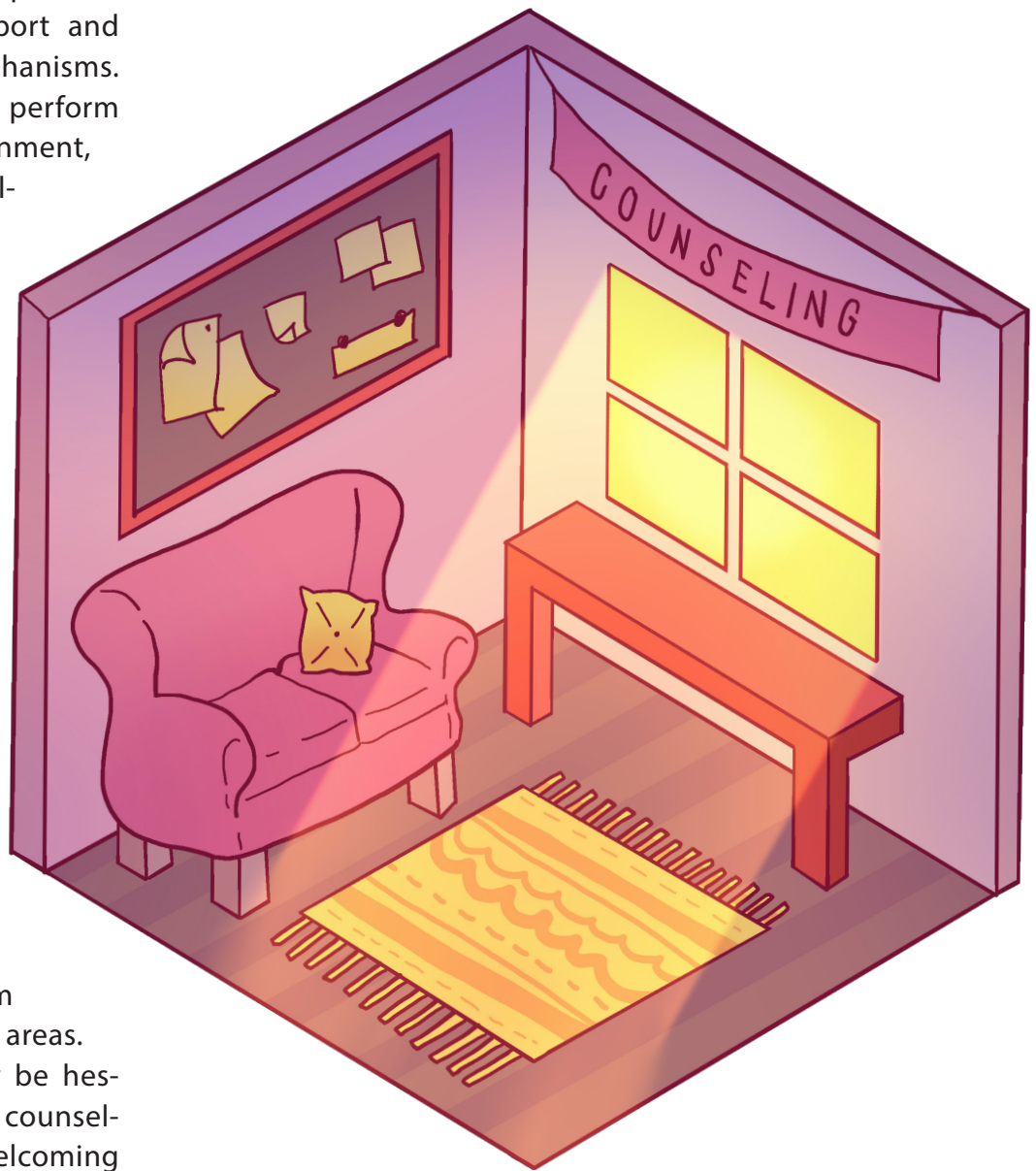


# STIGMA: ALL ABOUT COUNSELING PROGRAM

Lee '25

allenges. With a team of four counselors, the program offers a safe and confidential space for students to seek support and develop coping mechanisms. Despite the pressure to perform in a high-stress environment, Director of Counseling Mrs. Raynetta Gibbs emphasizes the importance of reducing the stigma around seeking mental health support and encourages all students to take advantage of the counseling services.

As Choate continues to evolve, Ms. Gibbs envisions a counseling office that is adaptable and accessible, with a presence in dorm rooms and common areas. For students who may be hesitant to seek help, the counseling team at Choate is welcoming and ready to listen.



Graphic by Melody Qian '24

# THE NECESSITY

By Sarina Fernando

The importance of water fountains is often underestimated. Especially at a boarding school like Choate, they are often the only source of water for students. For this reason, lack of clean, accessible water is an issue that must be addressed. In general, clean water is a hugely limited resource, and water fountains have a long, disease-filled history. While the first water fountains emerged in ancient Greece, they have changed drastically in appearance and function since then.<sup>1</sup>

The prevalence of water fountains has increased from its invention in Ancient Greece to its current uses. However, recently fewer and fewer water fountains are being made in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> There are several reasons for this. In our capitalist world, water has transitioned into a marketable resource. Brands are popping up everywhere, advertising more healthy water.

Stigma has emerged around drinking water from the tap or from fountains, as concern over the sanitation of fountains rises. This extends to the Choate community as well. Sophia Liao '25, shared that many students in her dorm, Bernhard house, do not drink water from the tap due to a

weird taste or fears around sanitation. This is a common sentiment around campus. While there are water fountains in every academic building, many dorms, including Bernhard, Tenney, Hall, and West Wing do not have them.

Furthermore, one dorm, Hall, had extreme issues with their running water in the dorm. According to Nao Murata '25, "One time the second-floor sink water was all black, it came out black." After this issue was reported, the dorm residents made many requests for a water fountain. However, the only replacement they received was a filtered sink, which still not many girls use.

While there are many water regulations in Connecticut and the safety of the water is often the same as that of bottled water,<sup>1</sup> many students complain about the taste of tap water. Especially with incidents such as the one in the Hall dormitory, many students are doubtful about the safety of the sink water. This often leads them to purchase items such as bottled water or Brita filters to clean their water before drinking it. Some students even go so far as to only drink water from places such

as the dining hall or the water bottle fillers around campus to avoid the filtered tap water or the water from classic water fountains.

This is an issue for multiple reasons. The first is dehydration. A lot of students are opting out of drinking water if they don't have a Brita or water fountain in their dorm. 60% of the human body consists of water, meaning that dehydration has a severe impact on the body and causes symptoms like headaches, lightheadedness, and feeling weak.

Furthermore, more and more people are opting to purchase bottled water. While these bottles are recyclable, only 29.1% of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) water bottles that were thrown away got properly recycled in 2018.<sup>1</sup> A shift towards single-use plastic water bottles will ultimately be detrimental to the environment.

It is important to acknowledge that the mere idea of being able to access clean water in our sinks and buildings, is a privilege. By reducing the stigma around drinking tap water and promoting research on water safety, many of the issues surrounding water access could be reduced.



# TY OF WATER

dez-Grinshpun '25

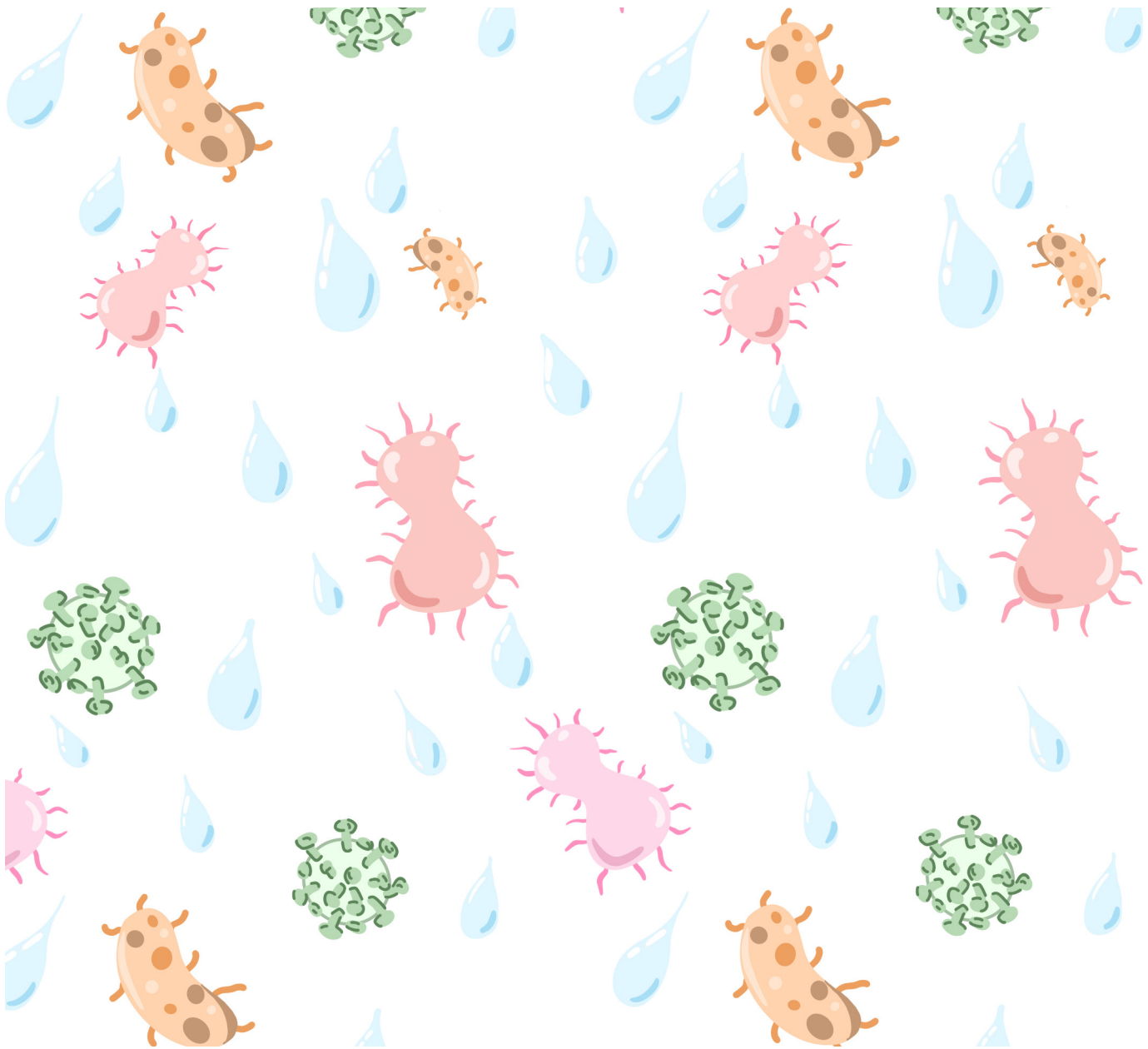
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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26





# HEALTH CENTER CONTROVERSY

By Jolie Zhang '26

\*Disclaimer: this article represents the opinion of the author and not necessarily the publication.

For a boarding school student, the health center is a crucial resource that provides access to medical care and support. The health center is often the first point of contact for students who are feeling unwell or experiencing health-related issues. While I agree that the health center should provide a range of services that are accessible, effective, and responsive to the needs of students, questions have arisen about whether the students are abusing these health center services.

Personally, I have utilized the health center for both legitimate health concerns and also as a place to catch up on sleep during the class day. While some may argue that visiting the health center for a nap is an abuse of its purpose, getting sufficient sleep is a genuine health concern that is often disregarded and overlooked.

Similarly, while using the health center as an excuse to skip a class or miss an assessment is an example of abusing the privilege of the health center, there is almost always an underlying reason that reflects a broader issue. It could be due to lack of sleep, feeling overwhelmed in classes, or having

insufficient time for work. In a highly demanding environment like Choate, it is understandable and to some degree commendable when students recognize and prioritize their mental well-being. While some argue that these reasons are not serious physical health issues, the health center remains a safe place for all students to receive the support they need.

**"Students should feel comfortable discussing their mental health with teachers, advisors, and other staff members, and know that they will be met with compassion and understanding."**

It is important to note that mental health concerns are just as valid as physical health issues, and students should feel empowered to seek help when they need it. In fact, taking a mental health day or seeking support from the health center may actually improve a student's academic performance in the long run by allowing them to recharge and refocus.

Schools like Choate carry a responsibility to provide resources and support for both the mental and physical well-being of the student body. The health center is an integral part of this effort, providing a range of services to this cause. It is crucial for students to understand that the health center is a resource available to them, and they should not hesitate to utilize it when needed. Moreover, it is important for the school to actively promote a culture of mental health awareness and destigmatize seeking support. Students should feel comfortable discussing their mental health with teachers, advisors, and other staff members, and know that they will be met with compassion and understanding.

In conclusion, while misusing the health center is a legitimate concern, it is important for Choate to recognize the underlying reasons that prompts students to abuse this privilege. Rather than stigmatizing or punishing students for this practice, the school should strive to provide a supportive environment where students feel empowered to prioritize their mental health and utilize the resources available to them.

# THE IMPACT OF WARM T

By Kara V

Teachers, doctors, and parents are always emphasizing the importance of sleep, sleep, sleep. They are even supported by studies that recommend seven to nine hours of sleep per night for the average high-school and college student. But do high school students— especially Choate students— really sleep the recommended hours? No. Definitely not.

Sleep is crucial for the recovery and development of the human mind and body. Sufficient sleep leads to improvements in learning and memory formation; restoration of neural connections; and effective control of emotions, decision making, and social interactions.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, insufficient amounts of sleep results in decreased attention, impaired memory, slowed processing, irritability, and reduced creativity.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite these clear factors providing evidence for the necessity of sufficient sleep, many teenagers still don't get enough. The reason? Inconsistent sleep schedules, the lack of priority given to sleep, procrastination, and excessive use of electronic devices. But environmental factors

can also impact sleep— especially warm temperatures.

As temperatures begin to rise in the spring, another challenge preventing students from getting sufficient sleep is added to the long list of obstacles that students already face. The regulation of body temperature— or thermoregulation— plays a significant role in the sleep cycle. As our bodies prepare for sleep, heat is pushed to the body's extremities and blood vessels on the skin become larger to release heat, resulting in a drop in core body temperature that leads to feelings of drowsiness and eventually sleep.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, rising body temperatures, usually occurring in the early morning, results in increased alertness and activity.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, maintenance and adjustment of body temperature through thermoregulation is vital in regulating the sleep cycle and our circadian rhythms, and disruption of this cycle through changes in temperature contribute to decreased sleep efficiency.

Warm to hot temperatures make it difficult for the body to cool itself, affecting the ability to fall asleep, sleep satisfaction, and sleep adequateness. This reduced

sleep efficiency is a result of high temperatures that cause many individuals to wake up multiple times during the night. Furthermore, warm temperatures diminish the time the body spends in slow-wave sleep and REM sleep— sleep stages that allow the body to repair cells, strengthen the immune system, and process memory emotions.<sup>4</sup> Even mild heat exposure can negatively impact sleep, and a study conducted by the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) between 2001-2011 revealed that high nighttime temperatures with a deviation of 1 from average monthly nighttime temperatures leads to an additional three nights of disrupted sleep for every 100 people.<sup>3</sup>

With warmer temperatures in the spring undoubtedly impacting the sleep of many Choate students, external management of body temperature can help improve sleep. To begin, exercise results in elevated body temperature that can last for up to four hours, preventing the decline in body temperature and leading to increasing alertness.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, limiting the amount of exercise when it gets closer to bedtime can improve sleep qual-

# TEMPERATURES ON SLEEP

Wang '24

ity. Dressing in breathable fabrics such as cotton, linen, and silk can also increase comfort when sleeping; avoiding synthetic bedding and using light sheets can help with this as well.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, for dorms and rooms that receive large amounts of direct sunlight, closing the blinds or curtains during the day and keeping the room shaded will minimize the amount of heat trapped and decrease the temperature to improve sleep at night. Optimal temperatures for effective sleep are between 18-24 (65-75 ),<sup>4</sup> and this could also be maintained by using fans or opening the windows at night to let cool air in.

Both at Choate and beyond, sufficient sleep is essential for high functionality and cognition. Increasing temperatures in the spring can negatively impact the quality and amount of sleep received by disrupting the body's thermoregulation

and circadian rhythms. However, by slightly altering our external environment, sleep efficiency can be improved and lead to an overall increase in performance and physical health...of course, nothing beats air conditioning, though.

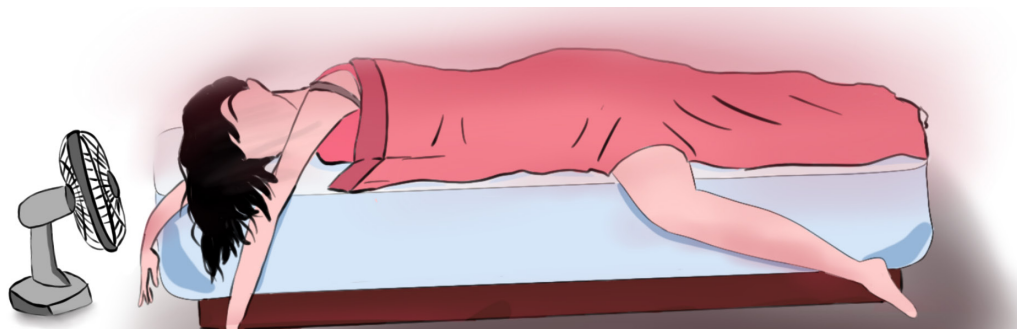
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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26



# SPONTANEOUS ALLERGIES

By Caroline Kim '25

The beginning of spring often brings with it sneezing, itchiness, and overall discomfort. Over 100 million people in the United States suffer from seasonal allergies every year.<sup>1</sup> This number is growing steadily as increasing cases of hay fever, food allergies,

and dust allergies are reported across the country.<sup>2</sup> Curiously, there has also been a spike in cases of “spontaneous” allergies, in which patients experience a reaction to a substance they were previously tolerant of. Such incidents have sparked intrigue from the

scientific community and elicited further research.

While allergies are some of the most common conditions experienced by Americans, many do not understand how they develop. At the most basic level, allergies are the body’s de-



Graphic by Melody Qian '24

fense mechanisms against substances it mistakenly identifies as harmful. When these substances enter the body, the immune system creates antibodies called immunoglobulin E (IgE) in a process called sensitization. These antibodies attach themselves to cells and release inflammatory substances including histamine, which triggers the symptoms associated with allergies.<sup>3</sup>

Typically, as someone ages, their immune system weakens, so their response to allergens also weakens. However, in recent years, the opposite has become more common. Many teenagers and adults are experiencing what is known as adult-onset allergies. While the cause remains unknown, various theories help to gain an understanding of this mysterious condition.<sup>4</sup>

The most common theory behind adult-onset allergies is the hygiene hypothesis. It states that childhood exposure to certain bacteria develops the immune system and teaches it to differentiate between harmful and harmless bacteria.<sup>5</sup>

However, since the beginning of the pandemic, many households have maintained extremely sanitary environments that have reduced children's exposure to bacteria. Now, with a return to normalcy, people may expose themselves to bacteria they haven't encountered before. This could trigger the sensitization process and release histamine,

thereby developing an allergy. If your body remains exposed to this substance, the immune system will gradually stop treating it as an allergen.<sup>6</sup>

While allergies can be uncomfortable and troublesome to deal with, many cures have been developed to ease their impact. Common cures for allergies include antihistamines, which block the impacts that histamine has on the body and reduce symptoms. If allergies grow to be more serious, inhalers or ACE inhibitors can be used as cures.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, allergies can develop at any point in life. While the root causes of adult-onset allergies are unknown, there are many viable theories that explain why they develop and how they can be cured. It is important to identify spontaneous allergies when they occur in order to seek effective solutions and cures.

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# THE KEY TO A HOW FRUITS CAN TRAIN

By Isabella

Incorporating fruits into your diet is crucial for achieving optimal health and a well-balanced diet. These nutrient-rich foods are abundant in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants that are essential for sustaining good health. Apples: An apple a day may, in fact, keep your doctor away. Studies have shown that frequent consumption of apples can reduce total cholesterol and lower the risk of heart disease.<sup>1</sup> The phenolic compounds found in apple skins help promote healthy cellular function and proper blood flow. Apples are also a great source of both soluble and insoluble fiber— including pectin, hemicellulose, and cellulose— which support digestion, blood sugar management, and heart health. Additionally, they contain disease-fighting plant polyphenols, including vitamin C, that may lower the risk of various conditions such as stroke, cancer, overweight, obesity, and neurological disorders.

**Pineapples:** Pineapples are renowned for their ability to dominate any fruit medley. This tropical fruit is rich in vitamin C, which is crucial for immune health, iron ab-

sorption, and growth and development. Pineapples also contain the mineral manganese, which plays a vital role in metabolism, blood clotting, and bone health. Just one cup of pineapple contains more than half of the manganese the body requires in a day, and more than 88% of the daily requirement of vitamin C.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, pineapple is the only known food source of bromelain, a group of enzymes that aid protein digestion and have anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. Pineapple is also abundant in flavonoids and phenolic acids, which act as antioxidants and protect your cells from free radicals that can cause chronic diseases.

**Cantaloupe:** Cantaloupes, part of the Cucurbitaceae family, are related to various other melons, squashes, and cucumbers.<sup>3</sup> A single cup of cantaloupe offers over 100% of your daily recommended intake of vitamin A and nearly 100% of your daily recommended allowance of vitamin C, both of which are crucial for maintaining healthy skin. Vitamin A provides protection against sun damage. Cantaloupe is also rich in lutein

and zeaxanthin, two antioxidants responsible for the yellow and red hues in fruits and vegetables. These antioxidants, in combination with vitamin A, maintain good vision, slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration, and can even help prevent asthma later in life.

**Grapes:** These little oblong globes pack a potent nutritional punch. Loaded with vitamin C and antioxidants, they can boost your immune system and combat free radicals, reducing the risk of cancer.<sup>4</sup> The standout among them is resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant that can reduce inflammation, block cancer cell growth, protect the heart, and prevent cognitive disorders such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's by reducing oxidative stress. It even protects certain genes that contribute to healthy aging and longevity, making it a potential ally in the fight against aging. Grapes also contain melatonin, a sleep hormone that can promote restful sleep.

**Watermelon:** Finally, as we head into the summer months this one is a crowd favorite by far, and for good reason. Watermelon's

# FRUITFUL LIFE: TRANSFORM YOUR HEALTH

la Wu '24

name is indicative of its high water content, with a single cup containing approximately five ounces of water, which helps support various bodily functions such as circulation, skin health, and digestion<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, watermelon boasts several essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A and C, potassium, magnesium, B vitamins, and antioxidants that can protect against cellular damage. The natural sweetness of this fruit also contains L-citrulline, a substance that can improve arterial function, lower blood pressure, and enhance muscle oxygenation during exercise. Fruits are a powerhouse of essential nutrients that can benefit your health in countless ways. From boosting your im-

mune system to improving your gut health, fruits can be the key to achieving optimal health and wellness. So the next time you're craving a sweet treat, reach for a juicy piece of fruit and enjoy all the health benefits it has to offer.

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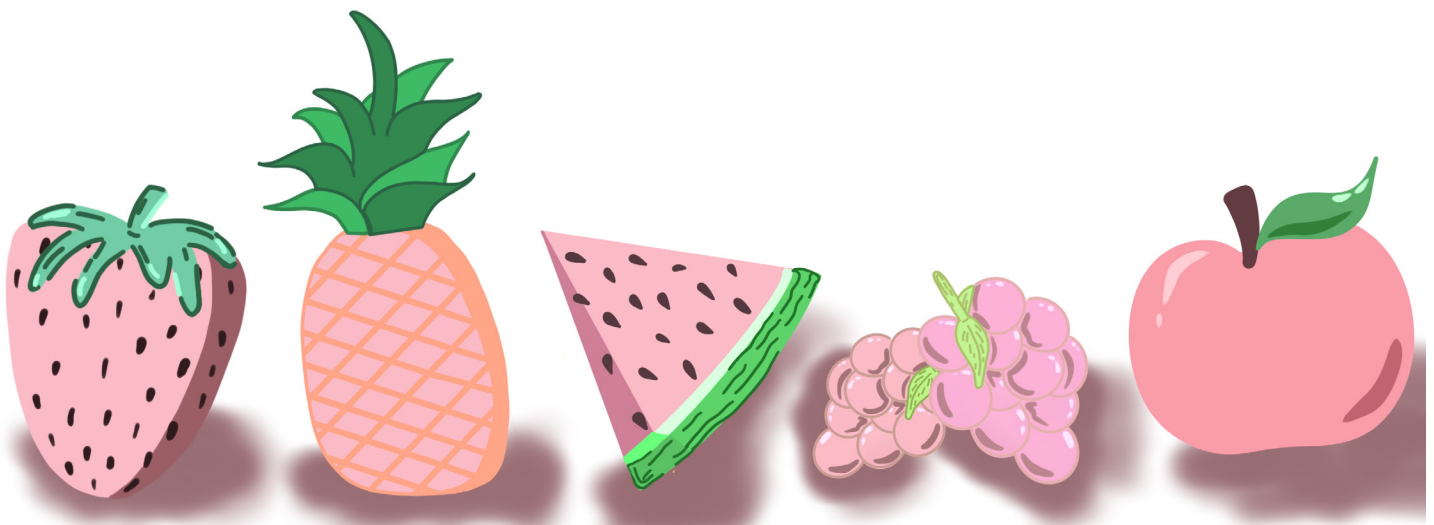
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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26



# PEER-TO-PE

By Claire

As busy Choate students, it's easy for personal health and wellness to tumble to the bottom of our to-do lists. I, myself, admit to falling for this trap, especially in junior spring. However, it is important to continue reminding ourselves that our health should be our top priority at all times. Here are some helpful tips and tricks that I always strive for to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

## Nutrition

Having a healthy, balanced diet packed full of nutrition is key for your personal health because, after all, you are what you eat. It may seem tempting to place a quick DoorDash fast food order, but having an imbalanced diet or skipping meals altogether can be very detrimental to your health. I promise the walk to the dining hall will be worth it for a nourishing plate of food. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, a healthy plate consists of vegetables, fruit, protein, and whole grain.<sup>1</sup> With every meal, you should be aiming for this balance of different foods. Take advantage of the salad station and Meatless Mondays to load your plate full of nutritious vegetables. Check out the fruit baskets in front of the server for a fresh orange or banana as a snack. The dining hall's main dishes can be great sources

of protein and grain, but if nothing looks appealing to you, I recommend making a sandwich at the sandwich station. It's a great way to get your protein, vegetables, and whole grain all in one delicious meal. My personal favorite sandwich consists of tuna, cheese, lettuce, pickle, and pesto mayo on a hearty slice of whole wheat bread. For vegetarians, Laya Raj '24 recommends a toasted cheese, pesto mayo, and tomato sandwich. So the next time you see only a cookie on your plate, consider taking another loop around the dining hall to search for some healthy additions.

## Hydration

To pair with your healthy diet, adequate hydration is crucial to last you through a tiring day of classes. Instead of relying on the dining hall drinks or water fountains to keep you hydrated, bring a water bottle to class with you everyday. Invest in a reusable water bottle that will last you the whole school year. Not only should you bring it to class, but you should also put it on your desk as a reminder to drink from it a couple of times per class block. I often find that keeping my water in my backpack isn't enough to remind myself to use it. Lastly, make sure to bring water to sports practices, ensemble

rehearsals, and even just hanging out with friends. You never know when you'll need it, and hydration should always be a priority.

## Sleep

"Tired teenagers" and "Choate students" are often synonymous. We've all had those late nights, whether it be cramming to finish an assignment or staying up scrolling through TikTok. What follows is an exhausting morning of perhaps a caffeine overload, fighting to stay awake. This type of lifestyle cannot be sustained and is very unhealthy. Instead, as teenagers, we should be aiming for 8-10 hours of sleep per night.<sup>2</sup> It's important to prioritize sleep in your schedule, even if that means asking for a few extensions or using free blocks for naps. Another way to increase your sleep is to minimize distractions, mainly from your phone. Try placing your phone on the opposite side of the room, setting app limits, and staying off electronics before sleeping. For boarding students, 20 minute power naps in your room can be extremely beneficial in energizing your body and lowering stress levels.<sup>3</sup> For day students, there are plenty of comfy spots to doze off in the library or the humanities rotunda. Either way, revamping your sleep schedule is an urgent must-do that will drastically improve your health.





# DINING WITH DIET

By Calvin

Recently, dietary restrictions have grown as a global topic of interest. A survey in 2021 by the National Center for Health Statistics estimated that about 20 million Americans suffer from food allergies.<sup>1</sup> An additional 20 million of the population are gluten sensitive,<sup>2</sup> and approximately 120 million are lactose intolerant.<sup>3</sup> A 2018 poll once estimated that vegetarianism makes up 5% of the United States population.<sup>4</sup> With rising awareness of health, animal rights, and environmental issues, it is increasingly important for Choate Dining to incorporate nutritious options that cater to the needs of the various dietary restrictions of its students.

Realizing the significance of this task, Choate Dining has made countless changes to resolve inconveniences for students with dietary limitations. Meatless Monday lunches encourage people to reduce their meat consumption for personal health and environmental sustainability, while also providing a delicious en-

tree for vegetarians at Choate. Sage Dining Services have also established a gluten free station for people with such a restriction, and food allergies are displayed on tablets to accommodate students with specific needs. Soy, oat, and coconut milk are placed in a separate refrigerator for the lactose-intolerant population. The salad bar also provides more diversified options for the vegetarian and vegan population. Furthermore, not only has Choate Dining strived to improve food options for students, but the inclusion of a Dining Hall Committee also serves to better incorporate opinions from the student body.

Many students have acknowledged the efforts of Choate dining. Zachary Starr '24 stated, "I especially like the tablets with the allergies displayed on them. It allows me to make sure that I don't eat anything I am allergic to." He shares that he was able to avoid severe allergic reactions from dining hall experiences thanks to the

efforts made by the dining hall staff.

This positive feedback was echoed by Laya Raj '24. She said, "I appreciate the salad bar and the daily grilled vegetables. I like putting the grilled vegetables in my sandwiches. [And] Meatless Mondays are often my favorite meals of the week." These positive responses reflect the dedication of Choate and the dining hall staff to provide an inclusive, comfortable dining environment for the students.

Nonetheless, there are still areas for improvement. As Aria Ramnath '24 suggested, it would be beneficial to "offer a wider range of vegetarian protein that actually tastes good such as having a number of vegetarian options that we do on Mondays every day."

Ensuring a balanced, nutritious meal for the entire student body is often challenging. To overcome this issue, it will be crucial for Choate to communicate with the student body to optimize the dining experience for everyone.

# DIETARY LIMITATIONS

Moon '24

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Graphic by Maddy Childs '26

# FUNDAMENTAL FOOD AND

By Analy

Every day, students feel the need to compromise between responsibilities and healthy lifestyle choices. Finding a balance between work and well-being is essential in development. In this article, we will discuss the importance and benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

First, what exactly is a healthy lifestyle? The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not simply just the absence of disease. Researchers have argued, however, that the core healthy living is the steps, actions and strategies one puts in place to achieve optimum health.<sup>1</sup>

## “Old Habits Die Hard”

At times it may be difficult to develop healthier habits because one has become accustomed to making unhealthy choices. However, according to the National Institute of Health, making healthier choices is a process. By choosing to read this article you may already be

at Step 1: Preparation. The first step involves planning and setting specific goals. Steps 2 and 3 involve taking actions and seeking feedback within oneself to see if these health strategies are working.<sup>2</sup>

## Why is maintaining a healthier lifestyle important?

In a study conducted by the University of Oklahoma, more than 80 percent of U.S. teens have a poor diet and many are not physically active.<sup>3</sup> Eating provides the nutrients the body needs to develop, and move throughout the day.

Varying the foods you intake, with a balance of proteins, dairy, vegetables, grains etc. provides the necessary vitamins and calories for the body to store and use energy. While eating fat-rich foods such as red meat, cheese, butter etc. can be beneficial, it is important to assess and moderate the amount one is eating as too much can cause your body harm.

Research suggests that diets high in trans and saturat-

ed fats can negatively impact learning and memory, and nutritional deficiencies early in life can affect the cognitive development of school-aged children.<sup>3</sup>

Physical activity plays an important role in a healthy lifestyle. The recommended time of aerobic exercise per day is 60 minutes. This can involve all sorts of activities such as biking, running, and swimming. According to the NIH, the long term benefits of exercising include improving your brain health, reducing the risk of disease, strengthening bones and muscles, and improving your ability to do everyday activities. The short term benefits can include an increase in cognitive thinking, emotional learning, and decreased likelihood of depression and anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

This article shows that the best learners are those that are healthy learners. In an academically rigorous institution as Choate, is imperative to prioritize one's health and well-being to lead a successful and happy life.





