

# Health attitudes of the female students from olsztyn, poland – the physical activity, addictions and the knowledge about health behaviors

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## Annotation:

Efforts to improve the health of the population are now focused on promoting healthy lifestyle, improve living conditions and to reduce mortality. Health education activities include regular physical activity, optimal nutrition, reduce addictions and stress. The purpose of the survey conducted among 672 first-year female students at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (Poland) was to determine the attitudes of young women towards a healthy lifestyle.

Using anonymous survey questionnaire asked students about the form of physical activity, nutrition, the presence of stressful situations, the use of drugs, such as alcohol and cigarettes, and the interest in deepening knowledge of public health.

The majority of students have participated only in obligatory physical education classes in high school and college. They considered that physical activity during the studies should be voluntary. Only 4.24% of students were total abstinence from alcohol, but 79.10% was non-smoking. Many of the women declared the need to change the diet, reducing alcohol intake and give up smoking habit. The students felt that stress connected with attending university is unavoidable, and thus revealed an interest in reducing and limiting mental tension. Despite their young age, students expressed interest in topics such as: first aid course, nutrition, sexuality, and pregnancy problems.

## Key words:

*health attitudes, university, female students, Poland.*

**Подставки Роберт, Горник Катерина, Коланковска Евелина, Борачински Михал, Борачинска Сандра. Установки, интереси і думки студенток Ольштина (Польща) до свого здоров'я – фізична активність, наркоманія і знання про здоровий спосіб життя.** Зусилля щодо поліпшення здоров'я населення в даний час зосереджені на пропаганді здорового способу життя, поліпшення умов життя і зниження смертності. Діяльність в області здоров'язберігаючої освіти включає регулярну фізичну активність, оптимальне харчування, зниження залежностей і стресів. Метою опитування, проведеного серед 672 першокурсників студенток в університеті Вармії і Мазур в Ольштині (Польща), є виявлення ставлення дівчат до здорового способу життя.

У дослідженні використовувалося анонімне анкетування студентів про форми фізичної активності, харчування, наявності стресових ситуацій, вживання наркотиків, таких як алкоголь і сигарети, а також зацікавленість у поглибленні знань про здоров'я населення.

Встановлено, що більшість студентів брали участь тільки в обов'язкових уроках фізичної культури в середній школі і коледжі. Вони вважають, що фізична активність під час навчання має бути добровільною. Встановлено, що тільки 4,24% студентів повністю утримуються від алкоголю і 79,1% не курять. Багато хто з дівчат заявили про необхідність зміни дієти, скорочення споживання алкоголю і відмови від куріння. Студенти вважають, що стрес, пов'язаний з відвідуванням університету, неминучий. Тому студентки проявляють інтерес до скорочення і обмеження психічної напруги. Незважаючи на свій юний вік, студентки виявили цікавість до таких тем, як: курс надання першої допомоги, харчування, сексуальності і проблем вагітності.

*здоров'я, ставлення, університет, студентка, Польща.*

**Подставки Роберт, Горник Катерина, Коланковска Евелина, Борачински Михал, Борачинска Сандра. Установки, интереси и мнения студенток Ольштина (Польша) к своему здоровью – физическая активность, наркомания и знания о здоровом образе жизни.** Усилия по улучшению здоровья населения в настоящее время сосредоточены на пропаганде здорового образа жизни, улучшения условий жизни и снижения смертности. Деятельность в области здоровьесберегающего образования включает регулярную физическую активность, оптимальное питание, снижение зависимостей и стрессов. Целью опроса, проведенного среди 672 первокурсников студенток в университете Вармии и Мазур в Ольштыне (Польша), является выявление отношения девушек к здоровому образу жизни.

В исследовании использовалось анонимное анкетирование студентов о формах физической активности, питанию, наличию стрессовых ситуаций, употребление наркотиков, таких как алкоголь и сигареты, а также заинтересованность в углублении знаний о здоровье населения.

Установлено, что большинство студентов принимали участие только в обязательных уроках физической культуры в средней школе и колледже. Они считают, что физическая активность во время учебы должна быть добровольной. Установлено, что только 4,24% студентов полностью воздерживаются от алкоголя и 79,1% не курят. Многие из девушек заявили о необходимости изменения диеты, сокращения потребления алкоголя и отказа от курения. Студенты считают, что стресс, связанный с посещением университета, неизбежен. Поэтому студентки проявляют интерес к сокращению и ограничению психического напряжения. Несмотря на свой юный возраст, студентки проявили интерес к таким темам, как: курс оказания первой помощи, питания, сексуальности и проблем беременности.

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## Introduction

Health, as the value of acquired, in the opinion of the experts of the World Health Organization is a state of complete balance of the physical, mental and social, and not only the absence of disease and disability. Health is a value, not an end in itself, it should improve, enhance or restore, thereby improving the quality of life. The health situation of the population is determined by the influence of many factors associated with biological, social and economic factors. Amongst biological to distinguish it is possible factors associated with genetics, ripening or

the ageing. The environmental influences relate primarily to physical and chemical factors, and the social-life of a human being. The impact on health is also access to primary and secondary health care, which is known in developing countries, is often difficult. The most important factor that determines a state of complete physical, mental and social, is the style of life of the individual [1]. Specific behaviors associated with work and recreation, the system of values and life skills specific to a given person will be responsible for the satisfaction of life in full health into old age [2].

Efforts to improve the health of the population are now focused on promoting healthy lifestyles, improve

living conditions and to prevent and reduce mortality from diseases of civilization. Health education activities are aimed at making regular physical activity, optimal nutrition, avoiding drugs, the right amount of sleep and stress response. Negatively affect the human body lives in a hurry and chronic stress, alcohol abuse, smoking, willingness to take risky and aggressive behavior [3].

Activities undertaken in leisure-time is one of the main factors preventing cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers [4]. According to the experts, to maintain and improve the health of just necessary minimum daily 'dose' of exercise in the form of 10-15 thousand steps. It is recommended to practice a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate activity at least 5 days a week [5]. In comparison with other European countries [research project Bridging the East-West Gap] society Poles are showing the lowest percentage of people with high activity and the highest among the leading sedentary lifestyle. In addition, there is a tendency reducing of physical activity with age [6].

College is a time of learning and fun, mostly away from the supervision of parents, and therefore a way of life and nutrition student and the nature of the use of his free time depends largely on the financial situation, place of residence and the schedule of studies undertaken [7]. In general, young people are aware of the dangers of smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol. They know the consequences of poor diet and low physical activity levels, but the change of environment, succumbing to the influence of the environment that makes making decisions detrimental to their health. Researches on students' lifestyles were conducted in Poland [8, 9, 10] as well as all over the world [11, 12, 13]. Is, however, much

less research on the subjective opinion of students on the issues of public health. The need to raise awareness about the lifestyle of students, their level of interest in health prevention activities already observed in other countries, including Germany [14].

#### Aim of study

The aim of the study conducted among 1<sup>st</sup> year female students at the University of Warmia & Mazury in Olsztyn (UWM) was to assess their habits and attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle. The study aim was realized by attempting to answer the following questions:

1. What types of physical activity do students assume and how do they feel about it?
2. Are the students' lifestyles and attitudes towards health appropriate?

#### Materials & Methods

The questionnaire was conducted in the summer semester of the 2005/2006 academic school year during obligatory P.E. classes. A total of 672 1<sup>st</sup> year female full-time students enrolled at the UWM were surveyed, which constituted over 95% of females aged 19-20 from randomly selected P.E. classes. The research was carried out in compliance with prior consent from the Ethical Committee of UWM, and the volunteers willingly agreed to participate in the study. The vast majority of students were permanent residents of the Warminsko-Mazurskie voivodeship in Poland. Table 1 provides a more detailed picture of the research group.

The highest percentage of students reported renting accommodation (48.70%), slightly less at home (23.61%) or on campus (22.68%). The highest number of students were residents of villages (39.02%), least students lives in big cities – from 50 to 100 000 population (7.47%).

Table 1. Description of the examined population

Residence during studies											
Dormitory		Rented Room or Flat		Family Home		Boarding school		Other		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
122	22.68	262	48.70	127	23.61	27	5.02	538	100	122	22.68
Place of permanent residence											
Village		Town								Total	
		< 20 000		20-50 000		000		>100 000			
256	39.02	99	15.09	129	19.66	49	7.47	123	18.75	656	1--
Place of secondary school completed											
Village		Town								Total	
		< 20 000		20-50 000		000		>100 000			
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
28	4.28	183	27.98	195	29.82	85	13.00	163	24.92	654	100
Type of secondary school completed											
Comprehensive High School		Vocational Secondary school				Total					
N	%	N		%		N		% 100			
528	81.73	118		18.27		646		100			

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

The vast majority of respondents were graduates of comprehensive high schools (81.73%).

A diagnostics survey method was applied in the research using an anonymous questionnaire. Statistical calculations were performed with the aid of the Statistica v.10 PL software package.

### Results

The study results have been divided into the following categories of human behaviors influencing health: physical activity, personal hygiene, nutrition, alcohol/tobacco use, reaction to stress and knowledge on public health.

#### Physical activity

The behaviors and opinions of 1<sup>st</sup> year students regarding physical activity have been presented in tables 2-5. They show that highest percentage of the students (71.13%) took part in only one type of physical activity during secondary school. The vast majority of the respondents periodically restricted participation in physical education (55.21%) and 43.75% of the respondents did not benefit from the exemption of activities. Permanent exemption from classes declared seven women (1.04%) (Tab. 2).

Physical education classes in high school are mandatory, but the study shows that not all respondents took part in them (93.06%). Approximately one third of them declared exercising alone or sporadically with family (28.39%). Only 10.16% practiced sports in school sports clubs and 7.10% in those organized by non-school

sports clubs. None of them benefited from the proposed activities organized by the Academic Sports Association (Tab. 3).

The vast majority of surveyed students (72.68%) assessed their level of physical fitness as good, and about 18.70% as satisfactory. Nearly 7% of respondents considered their level of motor fitness as very good, and only 7 persons as outstanding. No respondent failed to assess the level of efficiency as very weak, and only 3 persons defined as poor (Table 4).

Due to the fact that post-adolescent girls often refrain from any forms of physical activity in secondary school as well as during their studies, the study subjects were asked about the desired nature and form of P.E. classes attended at university. Most students (58.18%) stated that P.E. classes should be offered as electives starting from the very first year of studies. Fewer students (25.45%) felt that P.E. classes should be obligatory during the first and second years, and by 11.67% should be mandatory classes throughout the course of the studies. Less than 5% of the students surveyed felt that physical education classes should not be at all. Most students (74.96%) wanted to participate in P.E. classes recreationally, while approximately one fifth (14.53%) preferred sports. Just over of students 4% weren't able to specify the preferred nature of P.E. lessons and 6.34% didn't want to participate in any form whatsoever (Tab. 5).

Table 2. Students' opinions on forms of physical activity assumed during secondary school

Number of forms													
1		2		3		4		5		Total			
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
470	71.13	141	21.40	20	3.03	28	4.25	0	0.00	659	100		
Not limited		Periodically Limited				Limited constantly		Total					
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
294	43.75	371	55.21	7	1.04	672	100						
Number of limited disciplines													
1		2		3		4		5		6		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
165	65.73	56	22.31	14	5.58	7	2.79	6	2.39	3	1.20	251	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 3. Forms of physical activity undertaken by students during secondary school

Physical activity form	N	%
Obligatory PE Lessons	577	93.06
School Sport Club (SSC)	63	10.16
Collegiate Sport Club	21	3.39
Non-school Sports Clubs	44	7.10
Society for the Propagation of Physical Culture	5	0.81
Other Organisation	4	0.65
Academic Sports Association	0	0.00
None	4	0.65
Individually, occasionally with family	176	28.39

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 4. Students' opinion on their level of motor fitness on a scale of 1 – 6

Level of motor fitness	N	%
1 (very poor)	0	0.00
2 (poor)	3	0.49
3 (satisfactory)	115	18.70
4 (good)	447	72.68
5 (very good)	43	6.99
6 (outstanding)	7	1.14
Total	615	100

**Explanations:** N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 5. Students' opinions on the nature and form of the PE lessons during university studies

Nature of PE lessons									
Obligatory during all study years		Obligatory during first two years		Only voluntary		Completely unnecessary		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
77	11.67	168	25.45	384	58.18	31	5.00	660	100
Form of PE lessons									
No opinion		I do not want to attend		Recreation		Sport		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
38	6.34	25	4.17	449	74.96	87	14.53	599	100

**Explanations:** N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 6. Students' opinions on sanitary conditions at UWM and methods of improvement

Are the sanitary conditions at UWM satisfactory?							
Yes		No		I do not know		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
236	41.48	100	17.57	233	40.95	569	100
How to improve it?							
Improve room cleanness						43	27.74
Cleaning products						48	30.97
Repairs; increasing the standards of buildings						41	26.45
University development						23	14.84
Total						155	100

**Explanations:** N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 7. Students' opinions on the most important pro-health activities

Most important pro-health activities												N	%
Everyday body hygiene												601	54.98
Nutrition												140	12.80
Cleanliness and Tidiness of Apparel												45	4.11
Cleaning and disinfection of rooms/flats												35	3.20
Cosmetics												117	10.70
Proper motor fitness												28	2.56
Other												127	11.62
Total*												1093	100
No of activities													
1 activity		2 activities		3 activities		4 activities		5 activities		6- activities		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
161	32.33	159	31.93	142	28.51	33	6.63	2	0.40	1	0.20	498	100

**Explanations:** N – number of answers, % – percentage, \* – the examined students could give several answers

Table 8. Number of infectious diseases familiar to female students

Number of infectious diseases																			
1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
77	14.21	94	17.34	118	21.77	115	21.22	76	14.02	28	5.17	29	5.35	3	0.55	2	0.37	542	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 9. Students' opinions on knowledge of first-aid

Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
635	94.78	9	1.34	26	3.88	670	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 10. Students' opinions on their nutritional habits and the willingness to change them

Current influence of nutrition							
Positive		Negative		Lack of influence		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
246	38.44	224	35.00	170	26.56	640	100
Future influence of nutrition							
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
305	49.35	203	32.85	110	17.80	618	100
Willingness to change eating habits							
Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
523	78.06	147	21.94	0	0.00	670	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 11. Students' opinions on alcohol consumption

Alcohol consumption											
I do not drink		Sporadically		Once a month		Once a week		Every day		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
28	4.24	561	85.00	25	3.79	40	6.06	6	0.91	660	100
Number of types of alcohol											
1		2		3		4		Total			
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
562	96.40	12	2.06	9	1.54	0	0.00	583	100		

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 12. Students' opinions on most often consumed kind of alcohol and access to it on the territory of UWM

prefer to drink		N	%				
Beer		324	34.25				
Wine		296	31.29				
Cognac		10	1.06				
Vodka		98	10.36				
I do not drink at all		102	10.78				
Other		33	3.49				
Total*		863	100.00				
Should Alcohol be Allowed on Campus							
Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
478	69.58	62	9.02	147	21.40	687	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage, \* – the examined students could give several answers

### Personal hygiene

A similar percentage of students surveyed felt that the sanitary and hygienic conditions are appropriate or had a neutral opinion (respectively 41.48% and 40.95%). Nearly one fifth female students reported that the hygienic conditions at the University of Warmia and Mazury, whilst 33.24% felt otherwise. The highest percentage of students (30.97%) indicated that in order to increase the level of hygiene at the university, it is necessary to supply cleaning products. Significantly fewer students indicated improving the cleanness of facilities and to remodel and improve the standards of the infrastructure as a whole (27.74% and 26.45% respectively). The development of the university was mentioned by only 14.84% of the respondents (Tab. 6).

Daily hygiene including showering, brushing teeth, and cleaning intimate parts of the body was indentified among the most important habits connected with good health by 54.98%. Similar percentages of students considered proper nutrition, the use of cosmetics and other as an important aspect of good health (12.80%, 10.70% and 11.62% respectively). Frighteningly low percentage of respondents opted for physical fitness (2.56%). Nearly one third of those questioned specified just one or two pro health behavior, while only 28.51% found three treatments (Tab. 7).

The highest percentage of students (27.47%) was able to indicate three infectious diseases. Similar percentages of students were able to indicate three and four infectious diseases (21.77% and 21.22%) and six and seven (5.17% and 5.35%). Almost few were able to identify more than 8 (Tab. 8).

Almost all students (94.78%) felt it was necessary to know first aid. Only nine people didn't consider this to be important and almost 4% had no opinion on the matter (Tab. 9).

### Nutrition & tobacco/alcohol use

Tables 10 – 13 present the habits and opinions of students regarding nutrition and tobacco/alcohol use. Nearly 40% of respondents felt that their current diet has a positive effect on their health, while 35% reported their negative impact. The majority of respondents believed that nutrition will have an impact on their health in the future (49.35%), therefore more than three-quarters of respondents expressed the willingness to improve their dietary habits.

The large majority of questioned 1<sup>st</sup> year students (85.00%) admitted to sporadically consuming alcohol. Only 4.24% denied drinking alcohol altogether with 3.79% stating that they drank only once a month. Relatively high percentages, 6.06% admitted that they drank alcohol once a week. The large majority of questioned declared drinking only one type of alcohol (96.40%).

Beer (55.41%) and wine (25.12%) were among the most popular alcoholic beverages. Relatively fewer people reported drinking vodka or other forms of alcohol (7.93% and 10.22%). Similar percentages of students said that alcohol should be readily available on campus or didn't have an opinion on the matter (39.21% and 39.06%), but 21.73% this (Tab. 12).

Most female students (79.10%) were completely against smoking but 6.32% felt it was acceptable in certain situations. Approximately 10.23% of the respondents believed that smoking helps to relieve stress and a bit over four percent – that it helps socialize. Most students who smoked (43.93%) wanted to quit, while a significant percentage did not wish to do so or did not have a clear opinion on the issue (28.97% and 27.10% – Tab.13).

### Stress

The opinions of female students regarding stress are presented in tables 14 and 15. Nearly half of the students (52.94%) agreed that it is impossible to avoid stressful situations while at university, while quarter (24.89%) were very worried about stress and fewer than 20% (22.17%) felt that they would be able to cope with it well (Tab. 14). Most respondents indicated two methods (44.83%), while a similar percentage of declared or use one of three methods of coping with stress (respectively 28.33% and 26.39%).

Sport was reported to be the best means of dealing with stress (19.74%), followed by meeting with friends (15.30%). Walking, listening to music or relaxing was also considered to be good methods by 11.91%, 8.21% and 5.35% of students respectively (Tab. 15).

### Knowledge regarding health care

First-year university students were very interested in gaining knowledge on the following topics of health care: first aid (61.03%), stress prevention and reduction (57.59%), nutrition (57.42%), problems with pregnancy and proper care during it (50.22%), and sexuality (49.04%). The spread and prevention of infectious diseases (60.28%), ethics of sexuality (52.65%), physical activity programs and guidelines (49.69%), controlling and assessing one's level of motor fitness (49.69%), and differences in the health behaviors of men and women (49.27%) were shown to invoke the partial interest of the surveyed students. On the other hand, topics such as: nicotine use and its consequences (61.40%), the reasons behind alcoholism and its consequences (47.65%), tiredness and fatigue (45.36%), and biorhythms and their influence on peoples' behaviors were not found to grab the attention of members of our study group (Tab.16).

### Discussion

Risk behaviors that contribute to an increase in morbidity and mortality among youth and adults, are due to behavioral and are often established during childhood and adolescence. Contemporary youth lifestyle is far from a healthy lifestyle model promoted in the literature. Increased rates of morbidity and mortality from various civilization diseases are mainly due to smoking, improper diet and lack of physical activity [15]. Sedentary lifestyle, and hence no activity in leisure time, is closely correlated with an increase in the number of obese people in the adult population in the European Union [16]. Despite growing awareness of Poles, the necessity of making physical activity to maintain and improve health, only a small part of the population has the satisfactory level of motor fitness.

It seems reasonable to monitor lifestyles of students, particularly in the field of physical activity and addictions.

Table 13. Students' opinions on smoking

Opinions		N	%				
I am in favour of total abstaining from cigarettes completely.		526	79.10				
I sometimes approve of smoking in social circumstances and with moderation		42	6.32				
Smoking helps relieve nerve tension		68	10.23p				
Smoking helps meet people		29	4.36				
Total		665	100				
Do you want to give up smoking?							
Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
N	%	Nie	%	N	%	N	%
47	43.93	31	28.97	29	27.10	107	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 14. Students' opinions on stressful situations encountered during studies and the number of methods they were familiar with of coping with stress

Opinions		N	%								
I consider stressful situations to be unavoidable		351	52.94								
Stressful situations are encountered but I shall cope with them		147	22.17								
I am very afraid of stressful situations		165	24.89								
I cannot answer univocally		0	0.00								
Total		663	100								
Number of indicated methods											
1		2		3		4		5		Total	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
189	28.33	299	44.83	176	26.39	3	0.45	0	0.00	667	100

*Explanations:* N – number of answers, % – percentage

Table 15. Students' opinions on the best methods of coping with stress

Methods	N	%
Relaxation methods (yoga)	26	1.96
Massage	9	0.68
Breathing exercises	7	0.53
Doing sports	262	19.74
Proper nutrition	23	1.73
Meeting friends	203	15.30
Listening to music	109	8.21
Talking to a psychologist	3	0.23
Proper organisation of time	9	0.68
Sleeping	49	3.69
Alcohol, nicotine and drug use	16	1.21
Drinking coffee	6	0.45
Drinking tea	17	1.28
Sweets	58	4.37
I do not think about stress	56	4.22
Relaxing	71	5.35
Sauna	7	0.53
Walking	158	11.91
Hobby	9	0.68
Talking with a friend	63	4.75
Reading books	10	0.75
Shopping	17	1.28
Sex	18	1.36
Crying	5	0.38
Watching TV	6	0.45
Taking pills/medication	12	0.90
I do not know	33	2.49
Other	65	4.90
Total*	1327	100

*Abbreviations:* N – number of responses, % – percentage, \* – the examined persons could give several answers

Table 16. Knowledge on public health gained in voluntary lessons

Subjects	I am interested in the following subjects							
	Fully		Partly		Not at all		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Tiredness & fatigue	81	12.96	269	43.04	275	44.00	625	100
First aid	392	60.40	238	36.67	19	2.93	649	100
Sexuality	264	41.77	296	46.84	72	11.39	632	100
Culture of interpersonal contacts	317	50.56	240	38.28	70	11.16	627	100
24 h rhythm of work and rest	166	27.62	267	44.43	168	27.95	601	100
Civilization diseases	188	29.15	305	47.29	152	23.57	645	100
Sexual life of humans	273	40.87	311	46.56	84	12.57	668	100
Essence of psychological and social health hazards	257	44.08	227	38.94	99	16.98	583	100
Rest	128	22.15	255	44.12	195	33.74	578	100
The spread and prophylaxis of civilization diseases	161	26.14	353	57.31	102	16.56	616	100
Ethics and culture of sexual life	212	33.54	317	50.16	103	16.30	632	100
Methods of preventing and reducing stress	362	59.15	208	33.99	42	6.86	612	100
Hygiene of brain-work	233	37.70	243	39.32	142	22.98	618	100
Proper nutrition	336	55.35	198	32.62	73	12.03	607	100
Veneral diseases and methods of protection against them	143	23.91	292	48.83	163	27.26	598	100
24 h rhythm of work and rest	136	20.96	257	39.60	256	39.45	649	100
Control and self-assessment of individual physical ability	121	18.56	324	49.69	207	31.75	652	100
Personal hygiene and lifestyle	154	23.77	293	45.22	201	31.02	648	100
Conjugal maturity	271	40.27	259	38.48	143	21.25	673	100
Nicotine use and its consequences	94	14.99	148	23.60	385	61.40	627	100
Physical activity programmes	107	16.64	323	50.23	213	33.13	643	100
Prophylaxis against colds and building resistance	198	29.03	289	42.38	195	28.59	682	100
Motherhood and fatherhood –planning of family	245	35.40	269	38.87	178	25.72	692	100
Alcoholism, causes and problems	104	15.78	241	36.57	314	47.65	659	100
Everyday physical culture	114	17.22	302	45.62	256	38.67	662	100
Differences in male and female health behaviours	174	25.44	337	49.27	173	25.29	684	100
Problems of pregnancy and its protection	345	50.22	247	35.95	95	13.83	687	100
Drug use	178	28.66	241	38.81	202	32.53	621	100

**Abbreviations:** N – number of responses, % – percentage

Graduates are assumed to be the elite of our society, so they should show understanding for the need to change lifestyles and promote healthy behaviors among their families and friends.

The basic aims of physical culture, which include stimulating development and motor fitness, health, recovery of physical and mental strength as well as shaping desirable personality traits is to form permanent motor habits performed daily in order to improve or maintain health at an optimal level. The presented study reveals the behaviors and opinions of UWM female students regarding the above mentioned aspects of health risks and their prevention. The results are alarming. Over 56% of respondents limited participation in obligatory P.E. lessons in high school because of sick leave, even though it's almost 73% of its motor fitness rated as good. Almost 60% of students agreed that physical education classes during the study should be purely voluntary since the first year, more than it should be of recreational activities (75%). Attitude towards physical activities students confirms that women compared with men less likely to undertake physical activity as well as participate in additional recreational activities at a lower frequency [12, 17]. The youth of today spend the majority of their free time on the computer or in front of TV. These negative

habits do not change during studies at university, when students spend even more time in the sitting position during lectures.

The problem of obesity and overweight due to lack of exercise and excessive food intake is currently a global problem, as indicated by the results of research within the WHO MONICA [18]. The main cause of irregular eating by students is the lack of time and an irregular schedule. Nowadays, due to the difficult financial situation of students take up jobs while studying, which further affects food products with high calorific value (fast-food), of late or in a hurry. Our research showed that nearly 78% of the surveyed students would like to improve their diets. Students are aware that proper diets in the past and now have a significant impact on their current state of health, appearance and well-being. The need for educating university age youth on the topic of nutrition has been observed throughout the world in countries such as: the United States [19], Spain [20], and Italy [21]. Providing knowledge regarding healthy eating and food safety can in fact lead to the improvement of dietary habits [22].

The conducted studies also dealt with the issue of tobacco and alcohol use. Most young people take up smoking and drinking due to peer pressure, curiosity, and in order to draw attention to themselves. Alcohol

consumption among students is recorded regardless of the country of which they are, or course of study [23, 24]. The problem of excessive alcohol consumption contributed to the creation of international research projects, such as The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD [25]. According to the research, alcohol usually accompanied by events or emotional situations. In the opinion of students facilitates contacts and improves mood. The large majority of respondents (approx. 85%) admitted to the sporadic consumption of alcohol with only a mere percentage (approx. 4%) abstaining from it. Data concerning the regular consumption of alcohol (every week – 6% and every day almost 1%) is very worrisome. It indicates that these young females are at risk of becoming alcoholics. Comparing our research to those of another Polish author, insignificantly more students (9%) in Gdańsk abstained from drinking [8]. In general the questioned students didn't have anything against the availability of alcohol products on campus. From the above we can conclude that drinking alcohol is trendy and students are significantly influenced by the university environment [26]. These results are alarming, because alcohol is a substance very harmful for health, consequently leading to mental, physical and social disorders. Pathological changes relate to the liver, heart muscle and nervous system and gastrointestinal tract. Alcoholism among young people causes more accidents, crimes and increased negative sexual behaviors.

Tobacco use also poses a major health risk, as smoking is currently considered to be the most serious health risk factor and the main reason behind premature mortality. Research Steptoe et al. [11] conducted among students of European countries indicates that the frequency of smoking by young people increased significantly. In their study, nearly 80% report a negative attitude to smoking cigarettes. Some of the students admitted to smoking regularly, and more than 10% smoke a cigarette in stressful situations. The percentage of women smokers in the presented research is lower than in other studies conducted among the students of Polish universities

(Medical University of Lodz – 31.6%, Medical University of Lublin – 25.2%) [26, 27]. The majority of smokers expressed the wish to break this negative habit (44%). An alternative to smoking may be physical exercise which helps relieve nervous tension. The fitness habit is definitely healthier than nicotine addiction.

Life satisfaction is also dependent on the ability to cope with stressful situations. Symptoms of depression were identified as a health problem among the students from many countries. Students pointed to general anxiety, feelings of hopelessness and sadness. Moderate symptoms of depression were reported in 43% of the students in Central and Eastern Europe [28]. Studies have shown that almost ¼ of students, even though they know ways of coping with stress, fears of occurring stressful situations during the study. According to Mikolajczyk et al [29] these situations arise not only from the need to learn, but also with a possible change of residence, change in financial situation and the need to adapt to the new environment. Students taking part in the study declared the elimination of tension through physical activity (19.74%) and meeting friends (15.30%).

An important element in shaping health behavior is the knowledge of the issues in this area. The university environment is a good opportunity for young adults to adopt a healthy lifestyle. It is possible that health education program during the university course have positively influence for alter the behaviors of students in terms of physical activity, nutrition and stress management [30]. In order to be successful however, such programs must account for the opinions and current behaviors of students in a particular university environment. Female students were asked about their willingness to participate in lectures in the field of public health. Our research shows that despite some negative tendencies many students expressed the readiness to improve their lifestyles. Observations concerning the lifestyle and health attitudes of young adults are a very valuable source of information and ought to be continued in the future.

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