

Off to College--Student's Medical Tool Kit

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Getting organized for college is so complicated. Dorm room supplies, checklists, orientations can take much of your time. The last thing on your mind is getting sick, after all, you're healthy.

But taking time to pack some medical supplies can save you a headache (literally) and some money later. It is likely someone—you, a roommate or friend will have a cold or flu during the upcoming months. It will be great to be prepared.

At your pre-college physical examination (checkup), discuss medication with your regular doctor. If you take any medication, regularly make sure there are no interactions with common drugstore medications. For example, ADD medications should not be taken with other stimulating medications like some cold medications. If you are an athlete, follow your coach's guidelines on allowed medications. Your phone will be valuable to store information so make sure it is password protected. Look at this checklist with your family and stock up before you start school. Keep your supplies in a clean container or disposable plastic bags and check expiration dates every few months. Buy your own supplies rather than a prepared first aid kit. Check with your doctor or pharmacist on how to take these medications or call your college health clinic with questions. You should call yourself, not your parents, as you will be taking care of yourself once you get to college.

If you get sick at college and start an over-the-counter medication, consider seeing the college health clinic or calling your doctor for advice to make sure you are using them correctly. Any serious symptoms such as fevers or unusual rashes need to be seen right away.

If you have an ongoing medical condition, even a minor one, plan your care ahead of time with your current doctor and the college health clinic. It's hard to make arrangements during the hectic move in time or worse, in the middle of midterms.

- Medical Contact list—doctors, therapists, dentists, and specialty doctors that you see with their names, hospital locations and phone numbers. Put this into your phone contact list to access quickly. Add your preferred pharmacy information.
- Medical Communication Permissions—find out how to give your college health clinic permission to talk to your family (if you want this for certain problems and maybe not others). Discuss your medical privacy preferences with your family. Students over age 18 are adults and the college clinic will require your permission to speak to your parents about health care.
- **Health Insurance card**—keep in your wallet and a copy left with your family.
- **List of medications, medication allergies and vaccinations**—on your phone or on a secure site
- College Health Clinic information—location, hours & phone number—in your phone

- College Emergency contact information—verify the college’s Public Safety contact information—in your phone.
- Your prescription medication—if taken—ideally a 90-day supply –and a plan for getting refills from home or college health doctor
- If needed: Both a pair of eyeglasses and extra contact lenses. Glasses will be a backup for contact lenses wearers during late nights or illnesses. Get your prescription updated with your eye doctor before college.
- If needed: A plan to obtain special medications or treatments ahead of time. Arrange with your doctor and the college health doctor: ADD medication refills or allergy shots
- If needed: Arrange follow up doctor or surgery appointments during college breaks
- A digital thermometer—very important!
- Bandages, assorted sizes
- Antibiotic ointment and alcohol wipes
- Disposable gloves, scissors, and tweezers
- Acetaminophen for fevers, headaches
- Ibuprofen for muscle aches, fevers, headaches
- Cough medication: Dextromethorphan (cough suppressant) or Guaifenesin (expectorant—thins mucus to cough out better) and cough drops
- Decongestant (Runny or congested nose or sinuses) --Pseudoephedrine or Phenylephrine—avoid if taking ADD medications. These cold meds are essential
- Cream for itches or insect bites—hydrocortisone 1%
- Allergy medication—diphenhydramine for allergic reaction
- Loratadine or Fexofenadine for seasonal or pollen allergies
- Ice Packs—reusable
- Stomach medications—Maalox or Tums for indigestion, Imodium for diarrhea
- Condoms, and if female consider Monistat and Plan B
- Hand sanitizer, mini for backpack and large pump for dorm

COVID-19 may still be an issue when you start college this fall. Be sure to discuss COVID-19 vaccination with your doctor. This vaccine may be required to be on campus due to state vaccine requirements for students. Also be sure that living on campus is safe for you if you have any medical illnesses that could make a COVID infection more serious such as asthma. Some colleges will be screening students regularly for COVID-19. Some residence halls will require you to move to quarantine housing if you have been diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19. Much is unknown at this time, so please attend your college health and housing orientation webinars presented this summer. Health is a major concern when you live in close quarters in a college environment. Hopefully, the situation will improve soon, and you will be off to a fun college experience!

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