

Off to College—Student's Medical Tool Kit

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Getting organized for college is complicated. Dorm room supplies, checklists, and 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 basic medical supplies can save you a headache (literally) and some money later. It is likely someone -- you, a roommate, or a friend -- will have a cold or flu during the upcoming months. It will be great to be prepared.

Look at this checklist with your family and stock up before you start school. 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, such as many cold medications. If you are an athlete, follow your coach's guidelines on allowed medications. 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 see your college health clinic for questions—many will take your questions by phone. And keep in mind -- your phone will be very valuable to store information, so make sure it is password protected.

If you start over the counter medications, consider seeing the college health clinic or calling your doctor for advice to make sure you are using them correctly. For any serious symptoms, such as fevers or unusual rashes, you'll 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.
- Health Insurance card—keep in your wallet and a copy left with your family

- List of medications, **medication allergies** and vaccinations – keep on your phone or on a secure site
- College Health Clinic info—location, hours & phone number— keep 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: Extra pair of eyeglasses and extra contact lenses. Glasses can 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 0.1%
- 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, also consider Monistat and Plan B)
- Hand sanitizer, mini for backpack and large pump for dorm

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