

101 Health and Wellness Tips for College Students

Published on Wednesday April 23rd , 2008

Between exams, papers and maintaining an active social life, many college students feel they can't really find the time to keep up on their personal health and wellness until an illness catches hold and stops them in their tracks. With most colleges providing health care and endless physical activities for students, staying healthy in college is about as easy as it will ever get. Here are a few tips to help students make the most of the resources at their fingertips and to ensure they stay healthy and illness free throughout their education.

Diet

Without careful attention to your diet, you could end on putting on the freshman 15 and more. Follow these tips to help keep your diet healthy and beneficial.

1. **Learn proper portion size.** To avoid eating too much of even the healthiest foods, keep track of how much you're eating. For most people, meat servings should be about the size of a deck of cards and other servings vary by the type of food. Check out recommended amounts [here](#).
2. **Vary your meals.** When the cafeteria has your favorite foods daily it can be easy to return to those old favorites every day. Changing up your diet from day to day is an important part of good nutrition so take advantage of the variety of selections available to you.
3. **Eat breakfast.** Start your day off right with a good meal when you get up. Whether you're rolling out of bed at noon or up at the crack of dawn for class, make sure you start your day with a balanced, healthy meal.
4. **Keep healthy snacks around.** It's easy to eat healthy if you keep the Cheetos at bay and stock your dorm room with fruits and other healthy snacks. You'll be more likely to reach for these than junk food if you keep them nearby or in your backpack.
5. **Drink moderately.** While college students are known for their partying, you can still have a good time without consuming all the calories that come along with binging on beer, plus you'll avoid the hangovers and other negative effects. Drink in moderation and you can have a good time without hurting your health.
6. **Don't fight stress by eating.** It can be tempting to reach for a bag of chips or some cookies when you're stressed out about an impending exam. Eating won't help your stress go away, so avoid filling up on snacks. Try working out or taking a break instead.
7. **Drink water.** Drinking enough water can help boost your concentration as well as keep you from overeating. Make sure to keep hydrated as you go through your day by bringing water with you.

8. **Limit sugary and caffeinated beverages.** Beverages may not fill you up, but they sure can help fatten you up and have a detrimental effect on your overall health. You don't have to completely give up soda and coffee, but you should scale back in order to keep yourself in tip top shape.
9. **Try to eat fruits and veggies.** Even if fruits and vegetables don't comprise some of your favorite foods, try to incorporate at least a few of them into your diet each day.
10. **Limit junk food.** Junk food is fast and easy and many students end up eating a lot of it while they're on the run to class or to work. While a little fast food now and again won't really hurt you, make sure it doesn't become a habit.
11. **Make it convenient to eat right.** Don't make it hard for yourself to eat right. Buy healthy foods and stock your fridge and room with them to ensure they're the first things at hand when you get hungry.
12. **Don't skip meals.** With so much to do, it's easy to forgo eating to run off to class or the library. Don't skip meals. Set up foods you can eat on the run so you'll have the energy to keep going.
13. **Indulge every once in awhile.** A little treat now and then is a great way to reward yourself for eating a healthy diet. Give yourself a break and indulge in a food you love but can't eat all the time.
14. **Take vitamins.** If you feel like you aren't getting the nutrition you need from your diet, don't hesitate to supplement it with some [multi-vitamins](#) to stay healthy and illness free.
15. **Get help for eating disorders.** While many groups focus on helping students lose weight, there are those who need help fighting eating disorders as well. If you are worried you have an eating disorder and want help, don't be afraid to reach out to campus resources for help.

Exercise

Fitting exercise into a busy schedule isn't always the easiest thing, but take stock of some of these tips to help you get on track to fitness.

16. **Stretch first.** Help yourself avoid injuries by stretching each time you exercise. Simple stretches before and after you work out or engage in physical activity can help keep you active and pain free.
17. **Ride your bike.** Instead of taking the bus or driving to class, try [biking](#) instead. It will give you a few minutes of exercise between your courses.
18. **Play a sport.** One way to get yourself motivated to exercise is to make it a game by playing a sport. Join an intramural team or play recreational sports through your school to get active and have fun at the same time.
19. **Use safety equipment.** No matter what sport you're playing, make sure to always use the proper safety equipment. It will keep you from getting hurt which will allow you to stay active more often.
20. **Head to the gym.** Most schools provide students with gym facilities they can take advantage of for free. Head to the gym between classes or when you get up in the morning to squeeze in a workout.
21. **Take advantage of fitness courses.** Along with gym facilities most students will have access to fitness classes they can take. Since you're already paying for these through your tuition you may as well take advantage and get a workout that will help keep you in shape and motivate you.

22. **Walk to class.** While taking public transportation might be quicker, walking will give you a chance to stretch your legs, burn some calories and relax before your next class.
23. **Incorporate different kinds of exercise in your routine.** When you work out, don't just stick to one kind of workout. Incorporate strength training, cardio and stretching exercises into your routine to make it well rounded.
24. **Make it fun.** You're probably not going to work out if you are bored with your routine or find going to the gym torture. Find a way to make it fun for yourself and you'll be much more likely to keep it up.
25. **Bring a friend.** With someone else relying on you showing up, you'll be much more likely to make the effort to work out. Plus, working out with a friend can be a great way to make working out more fun.
26. **Take advantage of open spaces.** Most colleges are equipped with large grassy quads or arboretums with trails you can walk on. Take advantage of these spaces to take hikes, play frisbee or just walk around.

Sleep

College students aren't exactly known for their early to bed early to rise attitudes, but getting sleep is an integral part of staying healthy. Check out these tips to help you make sure you're resting enough.

27. **Take a nap.** If you have the time during the day, a short nap can do wonders for your energy levels. Just make sure not to nap too close to bedtime or for too long, and a nap will do your body good.
28. **Don't work in bed.** Working in bed can make getting to sleep harder. Keep your work space separate from your sleep space to keep insomnia at bay.
29. **Get a full night's rest whenever possible.** While the amount of sleep each person needs [varies](#), most people need 7-9 hours to feel fully rested. While this may not be possible every night, try to sleep a full night whenever you get the chance.
30. **Stick to a schedule.** With different classes and work hours each day, it can be hard to stick to a schedule, but keeping sleep times similar from day to day can greatly improve your chances of getting a good night's sleep.
31. **Understand that lack of sleep can have a big impact.** Lack of sleep doesn't just make you cranky, it can also reduce your ability to concentrate and to excel at class, so try to get as much sleep as you need.
32. **Work out bedtimes with roommates.** When sharing a room with someone it can be hard to go to bed when you need to and not get woken up when you don't want to. Try to work with your roomies to make sure you each get the sleep you need.
33. **Avoid all nighters.** While you may feel like you need to study [all night](#) to do well you might be doing yourself a disservice. Not getting enough sleep can impair your ability to do well, regardless of how much you've studied, so make sure you get at least a little sleep before your big test.

34. **Create a bedtime routine.** If you have trouble falling asleep at night you can help yourself by creating a routine that will let your mind and body know that bedtime is approaching and that it should get into sleep mode. After a few weeks of practice this should help you fall asleep when you need to.
35. **Avoid caffeine, eating and drinking right before bed.** All of these activities can throw off your body's internal clock, so try to limit meals, alcohol and caffeine consumption to a few hours before bed.
36. **Keep your room dark and quiet.** While college campuses are hardly either, try to keep your room as dark, quiet and cool as possible. This will help trigger to your body that it's time for bed and help you get and stay asleep.

Sexual Health

College is a place where many students choose to explore their sexuality. Students can do this safely by following these tips.

37. **Get tested.** Protect your sexual health by getting tested for STDs annually or even more frequently. Most schools offer these tests for free or at a low cost, so all students, even those with small incomes, can afford the tests.
38. **Always use protection.** Unless you are in a long-term, monogamous relationship with a partner who has been confirmed STD-free, always make sure to use protection to prevent the risk of contracting a disease.
39. **Discuss issues with your partner.** Sex shouldn't be painful or scary. If you are nervous or uncomfortable with any element of your sexual relationship, make sure to bring these things up with your partner or health care provider to ensure things are emotionally and physically ok.
40. **Get regular exams.** Whether you're male or female, getting your equipment checked out regularly is a must. Women can get breast exams and pap smears that can greatly reduce their risk of cancer.
41. **Take advantage of vaccinations.** Many schools now offer the HPV vaccination. Female students can take advantage of these to reduce their chance of contracting the HPV virus, the leading cause of almost all cervical cancers.
42. **Attend informational classes.** Most colleges offer classes that discuss [sexual issues](#), so you can educate yourself and learn to stay healthy and happy.
43. **Find someone to talk to.** Many students in college have questions about their sexuality and some even feel confused. It helps to find someone you can trust to talk to in order to help you find some direction and figure out who you really are.
44. **Don't do anything you're not comfortable with.** While you may feel pressure from a partner or even those around you to engage in certain sexual activities, never do anything you aren't completely comfortable with. It's your body and you are in charge, don't let anyone else tell you otherwise.

Illness

With communal living and thousands of other students sharing classroom space, spreading colds and viruses is easy if you're not careful. These tips can help keep you from getting sick.

45. **Wash your hands.** Studies have shown that [simple hand washing](#) can help prevent a large number of illnesses. So wash your hands, especially any time you'll be touching your nose, mouth or eyes or if you've been around others who are sick.
46. **Avoid sharing beverages.** Germs are easily spread through the sharing of drinks, alcoholic or otherwise, so get your own and avoid sharing with friends.
47. **Don't go to class.** If you're sick, don't force yourself to go to class. It will only make you feel worse and infect other students. Email your professors that you're ill and stay home and rest.
48. **Get to the doctor.** If you have symptoms that aren't showing any signs of clearing up within a few days, you may need to take a trip to the campus clinic or your doctor. Simple illnesses can mutate into much more deadly and dangerous ones if left alone so make sure to seek help if you aren't feeling any better.
49. **Drink lots of fluids.** Colds and flues can wreck havoc on your body, often depriving it of much needed fluids. Replenish these by drinking plenty of water or energy drinks when you're ill.
50. **Get a flu shot.** With so many germs around, sometimes getting a flu shot is the best thing you can do to avoid getting sick. Many colleges offer these for reduced prices so students can get vaccinated for little out of pocket expense.
51. **Wear flip flops in the shower.** Dorm bathrooms are generally cleaned daily, but can become dirty quickly with so many students sharing them. Always make sure to wear sandals in the shower to avoid getting viruses and bacteria that can cause warts and athlete's foot.
52. **Avoid ill friends.** If your friend is sick, try to avoid spending too much time around them. While bringing soup or medications won't hurt, touching ill friends and their stuff can increase your chances of getting sick yourself.
53. **Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.** If your hands aren't totally clean, try to avoid touching these areas. The membranes in these areas make it easy for bacteria and viruses to enter your body.
54. **Try simple over the counter remedies.** Most viruses leave you feeling miserable but with no recourse in medications that can make them go away. Try out over the counter remedies to help ease your symptoms.
55. **Keep immunizations up to date.** While most students will have been immunized as a child, some shots may need to be updated when you enter college. Make sure yours are up to date to keep you from contracting a serious illness.

Stress

Students can get run down with so much going on. These tips can help you beat the stress.

56. **Create a routine.** If you get yourself in the habit of studying, working out, and sleeping at certain hours, it will be easier to fit in all the things you need to do in a day without feeling too [stressed out](#).
57. **Put limits on work hours.** You can't work all the time—fun and relaxation have to be part of your routine as well. Limit the times when you will work to give yourself time to sleep and rest up so you won't get sick.
58. **Give yourself a break.** If you've been working steadily for hours, give your eyes and mind a chance for a rest by taking a break. You can come back feeling more refreshed and ready to go.
59. **Be realistic.** Sometimes there's just no way you're going to get done everything you'd like to in one day. Be realistic about your goals and understand that you can only do so much.
60. **Understand you can't do everything.** While you might want to go to class, work, play a sport, and participate in clubs and social activities, the reality is that sooner or later you're going to get run down by trying to do so much. Focus on doing the things you truly love and forget about the rest.
61. **Get help.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, reach out and ask for help from professors and friends. They may be able to give you more time or help you to complete projects and studying more quickly.
62. **Take advantage of campus meditation and yoga programs.** Many campuses are equipped with programs that can help students get a release from their stresses through a relaxing session of meditation.
63. **Cut back if needed.** Sometimes students overwhelm themselves with everything they have going on. If you're feeling like you've got too much on your plate, cut back work hours, drop a class or cut out some extracurricular activities to make your schedule more manageable.
64. **Relax with hobbies.** Whether you like to paint or to destroy aliens with your friends in video games, making time for the things you love is an important part of keeping yourself from getting too stressed out.
65. **Give yourself plenty of time.** It's easy to put off starting on a big project or studying for a test until the last minute. You'll be much less stressed out, however, and will likely do better if you give yourself more time to work on it.
66. **Spend time with friends.** There are few things that can cheer you up like being around the people you like most. Eat dinner with friends or just hang out and watch tv or take a walk to get away from the stress of homework.
67. **Don't let yourself get run down.** With so much to do, it's easy to get run down. If you feel yourself getting stretched too thin, take a step back and evaluate everything you've got going on to determine what's really important.
68. **Learn time management skills.** Time management skills will make everything from getting assignments done to managing work a lot easier. Read a book or check out advice on the internet to help you better manage the hours of your day.

Mental Health

College students are in a high risk group for depression, so make sure you keep yourself happy and healthy with these simple tips.

69. **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** Many people feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help with their depression but this is unnecessary as it's a common and treatable problem that you don't have to deal with alone. Tap into campus resources to find help or tell a friend how you're feeling.
70. **Keep in touch with family and friends.** You can help beat [homesickness](#) and loneliness by keeping in touch with friends and family members.
71. **Build new friendships.** A big part of the college experience is meeting new people and forming new friendships so get out there and meet new people whenever possible.
72. **Expect things to change.** Things will change both at home and in your school life, so expect things to change over time. You will grow and so will the people around you.
73. **Understand that it may take time to fit in.** Most people don't make best friends on the first day of college. It takes time to build friendships, so don't get discouraged if you don't fit in right away.
74. **Don't let stress get the best of you.** Stress can be a major factor in many students' depression. If you're feeling stressed out make sure to take a break and set aside time to relax.
75. **Realize you don't have to please everyone.** There is no way that you can make everyone happy all the time. Concentrate on making yourself happy first and you'll cut out lots of stress and hassle from your life.
76. **Know the signs of depression.** It can be hard to differentiate a simple slump from serious [depression](#) so learn the signs of depression not only for your own benefit but for the benefit of your friends as well.
77. **Build on your confidence.** If you know you're good at certain things build on the confidence you take from these activities rather than concentrating on your faults.
78. **Find strength in numbers.** You may have an easier time feeling good and fitting in if you find a group of students who share similar interests and values as you.
79. **Volunteer.** Sometimes volunteering can give you a sense of satisfaction you can't get from work or class work, so get out there and help others in your community.
80. **Get involved on campus.** Joining clubs and social groups on campus can help you to meet new friends and keep you from feeling lonely or isolated.
81. **Set goals.** You'll be more motivated and positive if you give yourself goals to work towards throughout the school year.

Study Abroad

Before you embark on a [study abroad](#) program, take a look at these tips to keep yourself healthy at home and overseas.

82. **Get immunized.** If you're traveling to a country where you run the risk of getting a serious communicable disease, make sure to get vaccinated before you go. It can save you a lot of pain and serious complications in the future.
83. **Ensure you have access to necessary prescriptions.** If you have medications you need regularly, ensure you get these before you leave or that you have a place where you can get refills while you're away.
84. **Get a check up before you go.** It doesn't hurt to get a check up before departing on a trip to make sure you don't have any hidden illnesses or medical conditions that could affect you away from home.
85. **Avoid raw foods and water that seems suspect.** While water and food will likely be safe in most places you will visit, it's better to be safe than to get a serious food borne illness.
86. **Consider travel insurance.** In case something does go wrong when you're away from home, you can invest in some travel insurance which can give you advice and treatment just about anywhere.
87. **Bring a travel first aid kit.** Bringing a small first aid kit with you on your travels can be a great help to you if you get a small injury. With the kit you'll be able to take care of it yourself and you won't have to hunt for a place to buy antiseptics and bandages.
88. **Take precautions to avoid diseases like malaria.** In some areas of the world, students will run the risk of contracting potential serious illnesses like malaria. By avoiding wet and waterlogged areas at night and using mosquito netting and repellent, students can help reduce their risk significantly.
89. **Avoid contact with animals.** While household pets may be safe to interact with, many wild animals or those found on the street can carry diseases. Students can avoid contracting them by limiting their contact.
90. **Be careful when swimming.** Drowning is the most common cause of death for overseas travelers, so ensure that you're a strong enough swimmer before diving into the place you're swimming and stay near lifeguards and other swimmers.
91. **Get advice from doctors on pre-existing conditions.** If you have conditions like diabetes or heart problems, make sure you check with your doctor before departing to make sure you'll have the tools and help you'll need to stay healthy while away.

Miscellaneous

Here are a few other tips to keep you a healthy and active college student.

92. **Avoid walking to class in flip flops.** While they may keep your feet cool and look good with your summer wardrobe, few flip flops provide the support needed for your feet. If you are walking long distances, it's best to leave the sandals at home and avoid the arch pain and pinching associated with them.
93. **Keep backpacks from being too heavy.** An overfilled backpack can hurt your back and leave you with some serious back and shoulder pain later. Make sure your backpack is properly fitted and avoid carrying around more than you need.

94. **Quit smoking.** No matter how much you may love the sweet thrill of a nicotine rush, the reality is that smoking just isn't good for you or anyone around you. Quit as soon as you can to save your lungs, heart, teeth and years of your life.
95. **Don't drink and drive.** If you do overindulge in drinking, make sure not to get behind the wheel. Call a cab or get a sober friend to take you home instead.
96. **Make sure you have emergency contacts.** In case something does happen to you, make sure that the school and those around you know who to contact to get those you care about to you when you need their support.
97. **Wear sunscreen.** College kids on spring break aren't usually the first to whip out huge tubes of sunscreen to slather on. While getting a tan may prove you spent your break on a beach, it can also be a source of skin cancer, so make sure to protect yourself.
98. **Ensure that your medical insurance covers physicians in the area.** If you aren't going with your school's insurance plan, make sure that your parent's or your own insurance covers doctors in your area.
99. **Monitor existing health conditions carefully.** If you leave for college knowing you have a pre-existing medical condition, make arrangements to ensure that it's properly monitored while you're at school.
100. **Be aware that health concerns differ for men and women.** While men and women's anatomy is similar in many ways, some things that seem like they should be the same simply aren't. Educate yourself on the sex-specific aspects of wellness to keep yourself healthier and to know what to watch out for.
101. **Assert yourself.** Don't let anyone make health or wellness decisions for you that you feel uncomfortable with. If you don't want to eat that donut or have a drink, then don't.