

Off to College--Parent's Medical Tool Kit (2023)

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Sending your child off to college is a complex process that involves a lot more than packing up supplies and setting up their dorm room. It is a time to help your child become more independent through your guidance. Set up your student for a healthy college career by preparing for their medical independence.

Please preview your student's **college website for the health clinic resources** with your child. Some colleges offer Counseling services and a Student Health clinic for urgent or routine appointments, and some have fewer resources. It is easier for families to become familiar with their resources before they are ill or have a health emergency. The first few months of college require a lot of adjustment. Discuss how your child can reach you for emergencies.

Be sure their medical needs are set up ahead of time. Work with their current doctor to verify all immunization and physical exam forms are up to date. Send the forms in by the deadline to avoid problems during move-in. Obtain enough prescription medications for the first few months and have a plan for refills. Students must **know their personal doctors' contact information, prescriptions, and their medication Allergies**—have them list them in their phone. Common prescriptions to plan for include birth control, asthma, ADD, depression or anxiety medications. Visit the eye doctor and have their eyeglasses updated and contact lenses available. Set up allergy shots ahead of time at the college health clinic if available or a local allergy doctor. Plan surgery, wisdom tooth removal or other medical procedures to take place during college breaks. If your child needs a specialist near the college, work with your current specialist to set this up. Have your student call the college health clinic during the summer (with or without you) to discuss any questions and to set up a medical record account. Don't assume anything is automatically arranged.

Please be aware that at age 18, parents do not have automatic access to their child's medical records or medical providers. **After age 18, consent is required to allow college health doctors to speak to parents about the student's care.** Even the health insurance subscriber parent does not have access to the student's health information. Permission must first be obtained from the student due to privacy laws. Colleges may have release of information forms to sign before providing parents with any health information. Forms can also vary due to state law. Some colleges will accept verbal permission from students. Review the college web site and have a conversation with your child. College students have a strong desire for privacy so sharing medical information is an important issue to discuss.

Have a conversation about this independence, as some students avoid getting health care because of their fear that their parents will be able to obtain their personal health information regarding their office visits or tests. **Discuss your family values around health** including sexual health, vaccinations, and mental health. College students, while developing their own health beliefs, value their parents' beliefs.

Health insurance and medical costs are a big issue for college students. Please review your health plan before sending your student to college, especially out of state. Some health plans limit coverage to

emergency care only when outside of the home state. Be aware that out of network visits can be costly. Do not assume coverage without verifying directly with your insurer about your student's college location. Your student will be living there for around 9 months of the year. Because students move around so much, it can be tricky to find the best health insurance. Many colleges offer student health plans that are of good quality but costly. These are designed to cover the students' needs on campus and at the local hospitals. It is dangerous to assume your student will not need any health care during their college years. Also find out what mental health services are covered with your plan, as this coverage can be very important for students. Dental costs are usually not covered under medical insurance. Be honest with your students about the cost of care (deductibles, co-insurance) as students are genuinely concerned about burdening their parents with additional health expenses and sometimes avoid getting needed healthcare due to cost concerns.

Having a child moving away to college is a big change for parents. **Be sure to take care of yourself and ask for help if you are feeling down or depressed.** You can discuss this adjustment with your own doctor or a therapist.

COVID-19. The health emergency is officially ending as of May 11, 2023. The COVID-19 vaccine may not be required to be on campus, but will likely be recommended. Nevertheless, COVID-19 may still be an issue when your child starts college this fall. Some colleges will continue to offer students testing for COVID-19. Be sure to discuss COVID-19 vaccination and treatments with their doctor especially if your son or daughter has any chronic or serious medical illnesses. Much is evolving at this time, so please attend the college's health and housing summer orientations and webinars. Infections are a major concern because students live in close quarters in a college environment. Hopefully, the situation will continue to improve, and they will be off to a fun college experience!

Resources:

<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/index.html> For information on HIPAA

https://eforms.com/release/medical-hipaa/#By_State For information on release forms by state

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html> For information on FERPA

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