



Students
should
follow
these
tips to
stay
healthy
during
college
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Jane
Balbo
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Sarah
Racine
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Faculty experts provide 7 health tips for students adjusting to college

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By Jennifer Hughes

Going to school away from home can often be a major adjustment for students, especially for those who often don't think about their health as they focus on studying, making friends and creating new lives for themselves on a college campus.

Health and wellness experts from Ohio University, [Jane Balbo](https://www.ohio.edu/medicine/about/directory/profiles.cfm?profile=balbo) [<https://www.ohio.edu/medicine/about/directory/profiles.cfm?profile=balbo>] and [Sarah Racine](https://www.ohio.edu/cas/psychology/contact/profiles.cfm?profile=racine) [<https://www.ohio.edu/cas/psychology/contact/profiles.cfm?profile=racine>], have offered 7 health tips for students to make the adjustment to college successful.

- Students should **talk with parents about their family's medical history, as well as their own**. "For many students, college may be the first time they are seeing a doctor by themselves," said Jane Balbo, an assistant professor of family medicine at Ohio University's Heritage College of Medicine and a family practice physician at Ohio University's Campus Care.
- "Remember to **eat regularly throughout the day**, even when busy with classes, homework, and extracurricular activities," advised Sarah Racine, an assistant professor of psychology at OHIO.

- If they are a first-generation college student, **find out what their campus offers in the way of mentoring and services for first-generation college students**. “There can be a lot of doubts and questioning during that first year of college,” explained Balbo. “If the students don’t have family members who’ve been through it before, it can be really isolating. Sometimes just having a mentor in your life to talk to about the stresses of college can make the difference between dropping out or failing, and sticking it out and succeeding.”
- Students should **talk with their doctors about effective birth control**. “College students may have more opportunities to become sexually active, and an unplanned pregnancy can change the course of someone’s life,” said Balbo. “Not all birth control is created equal, and not every method is right for every person. If the college doesn’t have a health center, seek out a clinic, family doctor, or gynecologist in the community to get the facts.”
- “It can be easy to overeat at the dining hall, so **be mindful of your portion sizes**,” recommended Racine. “Also, be sure to treat yourself once in a while.”
- **Get the flu vaccine!** According to Balbo, “College students live in tight quarters and sit shoulder-to-shoulder with so many people – and their germs. Influenza is highly preventable when you get the yearly vaccine and practice good hand hygiene (wash/sanitize regularly, and don’t touch your mouth, nose and eyes – places where cold and flu viruses can enter your body).”
- **Sleep sleep sleep**. Balbo advises, “Make sure to get seven or eight hours of good sleep every night. If you’re not, do a google search for ‘good sleep hygiene,’ and learn some common changes that can make sleep better for you. Without proper sleep, your brain can’t learn as well, your immune system can’t fight infections as well, and your emotional responses might get the better of you in tough situations.”

In addition to her roles of physician and professor, Jane Balbo works to educate others about transgender healthcare and coordinates the LBGT health lab for OHIO’s medical school. She and her colleagues also collaborate to provide education to the medical students regarding sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Balbo’s competent and soothing manner, combined with her vast health knowledge, makes her a valuable source on health and wellness issues for college students.

Eating disorders are common among college-aged students. Sarah Racine, along with a team of researchers, examine how personality traits like impulsivity put people at risk for binge eating, especially during stressful times, like entering college.

Racine’s articles have been published in a number of journals including the International Journal of Eating Disorders, the Journal of Abnormal Psychology, the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, and Psychological Medicine.

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