



STUDENT HEALTH MATTERS

The College Students Health Guide

Irish Student Health Association (ISHA)



Welcome to College

The beginning of college marks a transition period for many young people and often represents the exciting beginning of adult life. Student health matters and this health guide has been prepared to provide you with some information on how to stay healthy during your college years.

We wish you every success in your college course, and hope that these years will be enjoyable and prove a rewarding and enriching experience.

The staff in our student health centres look forward to meeting you and are available to support your health needs throughout the academic year.

Best Wishes



Irish Student Health Association

ISHA

Medical records are private and confidential and are not stored as part of the main college records

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Healthy Diet

Each day, we make food choices that either benefit or harm our bodies. Poor food choices contribute to the development of illnesses whereas healthy choices bring benefits. Good nutrition plays a key role in preventing and treating illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, and osteoporosis. While other key factors influence health such as heredity, environment, lifestyle and mental attitude, nutrition is one determinant of health that people usually have quite a bit of control over.

It is important to allocate enough time daily to both prepare and enjoy healthy, nutritious food

Healthy eating guidelines suggest a way to eat that will help you get the correct amount of nutrients: protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals from your food to maintain good health.

The Food Pyramid

- ✓ Starchy foods like bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and cereals – choosing wholegrain varieties whenever you can, eating just enough to meet your energy needs
- ✓ Lots of fruit and vegetables, ideally more than five portions a day
- ✓ Some milk, cheese and yoghurt, preferably low fat
- ✓ Some meat, poultry, eggs, beans and nuts
- ✓ A very small amount of fats and oils
- ✓ And a very small amount or no food and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt

Key messages:

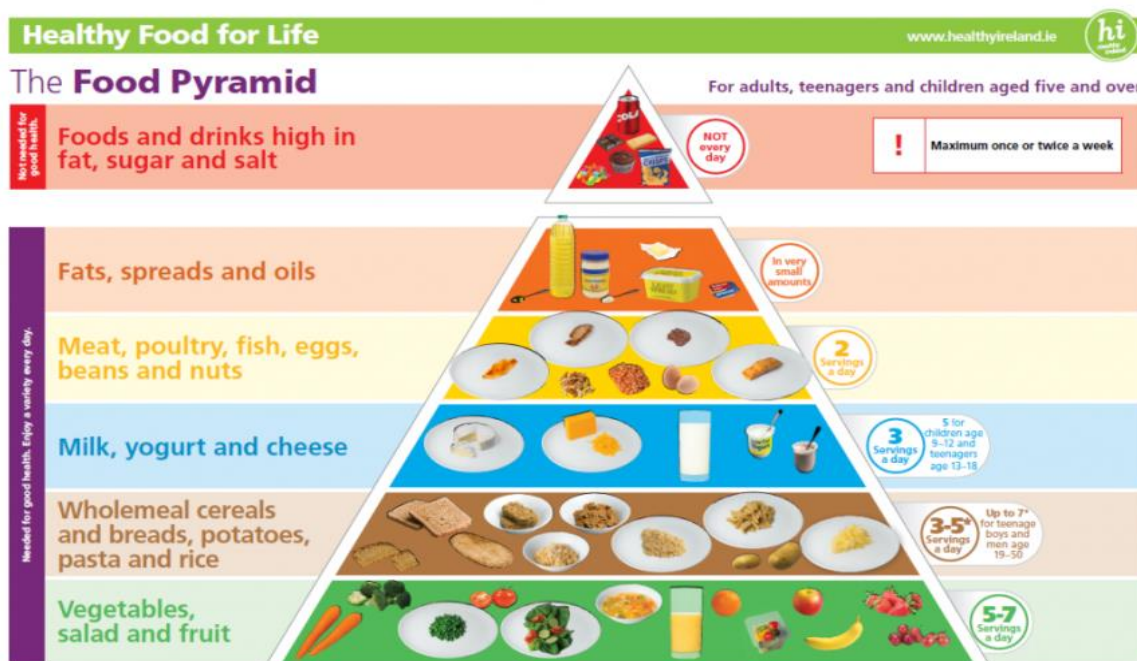
Limit high fat, sugar and salts

Eat more fruit and vegetables (5-7 servings per day)

Portion sizes matter

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid per day: water is best

To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity 5 days a week



For advice on healthy eating visit:

<https://spunout.ie/health/category/healthy-eating>

Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is important and reduces your risk of developing illnesses, such as coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, osteoporosis and depression.

The benefits of regular physical activity are many including:

- ✓ Boosts energy
- ✓ Helps to control weight and tone muscle
- ✓ Combats illness
- ✓ Promotes better sleep
- ✓ Fun / enjoyment
- ✓ Better self-image
- ✓ Longevity
- ✓ Releases endorphins and other feel-good chemicals to stabilise or improve mood
- ✓ Promotes psychological wellbeing
- ✓ Can reduce feelings of depression or anxiety
- ✓ Promotes new brain cell development and improves cognition and memory

How much exercise should I do a week?

As a young adult, you need to ensure you are doing sufficient exercise for your age.

- ✓ The recommended level for adults, starting at 19 years old, is at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity exercise each week. In addition, you should be doing muscle-strengthening exercises on two or more days that work all of the main muscle groups.
- ✓ 18 year olds are still growing and developing and therefore expected to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. This should be a mixture of different moderate-intensity activities, including muscle-strengthening activities on three days a week.

Moderate exercise includes activities such as:

- ✓ Fast walking
- ✓ Riding a bike
- ✓ Hiking
- ✓ Climbing the stairs

Key Messages:

Get moving more every day

Spend less time sitting and more time moving

Start slowly building at least 30 minutes of activity into the day

Increase this gradually to 60-90 minutes over time

Break it down into short bursts: 10-15-minute bursts of moderate activity throughout the day can be easier to fit in to the day than doing it all in one go

The important thing is to get up and move about more during the day

Most of the activity should be aerobic and moderate in intensity

This means that you are using your heart, lungs and larger muscles more effectively

Breathing will deepen and the heart will pump slightly faster during aerobic exercise

For more information about physical activity visit:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/health/physical-activity-guidelines/>

Smoking



Everyone knows that smoking is bad for you. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland with almost 6,000 smokers dying each year from tobacco related illnesses. Smoking related deaths are mainly due to cancers, lung and heart disease. Cigarette smoke has an effect on nearly every organ in the body and has a negative impact on your health in general.

When you smoke, your body takes in a lot more than just nicotine. Cigarette smoke contains tar and carbon monoxide and over 4000 toxic chemicals, many of which cause cancer. On average, the life expectancy of a long-term smoker is about 10 years less than that of a non-smoker. The younger you are when you start smoking, the more likely you are to smoke for longer and develop a serious smoking related illness.

It is best to never start smoking at all, however **if you do smoke, the best time to stop smoking is now.**

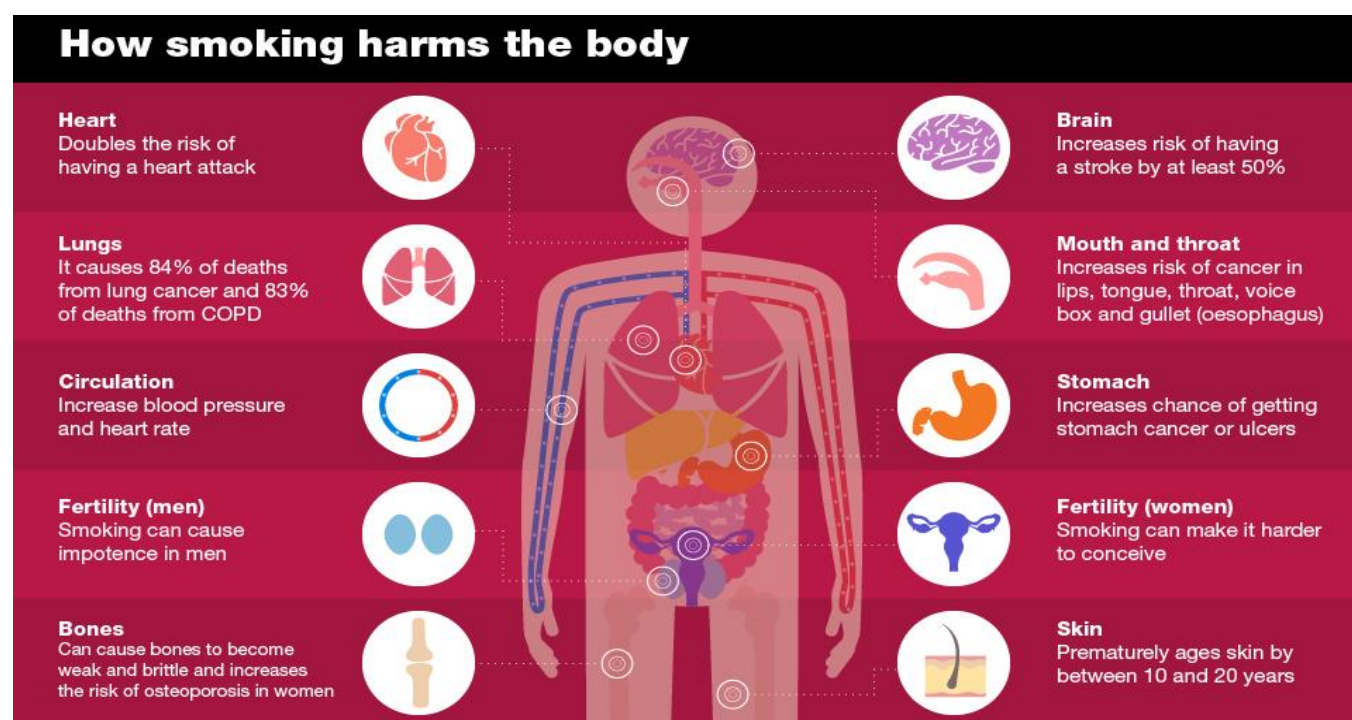
The good news is that the number of people including teenagers and young people who smoke in Ireland has

declined dramatically in recent years. The number of smokers in Ireland has decreased by an estimated 80,000 people over the past three years. The prevalence of smoking has dropped from 23% in 2015 to 20% in 2018 (Healthy Ireland Survey, 2018). As a nation, we have made huge progress towards becoming a **'tobacco-free Ireland by 2025'** (DOH, 2013). However, there is still **a lot more work to do.**

If you do smoke, consider quitting now

It will hugely benefit your health and well-being. Help and support is available. Speak to your doctor or nurse who will be able to advise you further.

Some college health centres provide smoking cessation services.



To find a specialist quit support service in your area visit:
<https://www2.hse.ie/quit-smoking/support-services/>

QUIT.ie Freephone 1800 201 203 or Free text QUIT to 5010

Alcohol

ask
about
alcohol.ie

You are at a very important stage of your life right now as you engage in studies, friendship and relationship building. College life can be an exciting time, but it is important to be well informed and careful about your lifestyle choices and decisions. If you choose to drink alcohol, it is important to be aware of the associated risks and the significant toll of alcohol related harm in Irish society affecting so many people. Drinking too much can have effects on your mood; feeling slow or sad in the mornings, lacking ambition, avoiding people, and not enjoying everyday things like going for a walk, seeing a movie, or meeting friends.

For adults, the low risk weekly guidelines for alcohol consumption are:

Less than:

17 Standard Drinks per week for men

11 Standard Drinks per week for women

2-3 alcohol free days per week to minimise tolerance and habit formation

Not consuming more than 6 Standard Drinks on any one occasion



Note that all measures are not equal. Home measures tend to be bigger than standard pub measures and some drinks are stronger than others. Check labels (%ABV). Try to keep an alcohol measure at home if you are consuming spirits and never mix alcohol with other drugs.

Being 'self aware' of how much, how often you drink and noticing overall how it makes you feel can help you make decisions that are best for you. If you find you are drinking regularly to escape problems, are beginning to experience blackouts (not remembering the night before) or people noticing a change in your personality because of drinking, then you may have a problem.

Remember that if you have grown up with a parent(s) or guardian(s) who misuses or who is dependent on alcohol you are at greater risk of developing an alcohol problem yourself.

If you drink alcohol, the **drinks calculator** and **self-assessment tool** on www.askaboutalcohol.ie/ can help you identify your level of risk. If you are at high risk or dependent you can contact the HSE Alcohol Helpline **1800 459 459** for a service near you or email helpline@hse.ie

You can also speak to your GP who will be able to refer you to get the support that you need.

Never Drink and Drive

For advice about alcohol and how it affects you, and strategies for cutting down visit:
<http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie/>

To see how other adults cope with time out from drinking visit: <https://www.oneyearnobeer.com/>

Drugs

It is important to know about the effects of alcohol and drugs to keep yourself safe and well. All drugs, including the misuse of prescribed medication and alcohol, can pose serious health risks.

It is always safer not to use drugs. However, if you do decide to use drugs, it is very important that you find out as much information as possible from a reputable source, such as the HSE website www.drugs.ie, about the risks and how to reduce harm. Harm reduction campaigns can be found on drugs.ie/campaigns at http://www.drugs.ie/drugs_info/campaign/

If you, a friend or a family member are dealing with a drug problem, there is a lot of support available. There are many local, regional and national services that you can contact for help. The **HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline** can be reached on **Freephone 1800 459 459, Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 5.30pm**. This service offers support, information, guidance and referral to anyone with a question or concern related to drug and alcohol use. All calls are confidential.

You can also visit your GP who will be able to refer you to get the support that you need.

To help you identify if your drug use is low, medium or high risk, you can take the DUDIT online self-assessment at <http://www.drugs.ie/DUDIT>

For more information visit:

<http://www.drugs.ie>

http://www.drugs.ie/drugs_info/campaign/

<http://www.drugs.ie/DUDIT>

Drugs and Alcohol Helpline: 1800 459 459

Email: helpline@hse.ie



Your Mental Health

Stress and Anxiety

Every student feels anxious from time to time. While a little pressure can help with motivation, it is very important to seek help if you feel like you cannot cope. Stress can manifest itself in a variety of ways and if you are suffering from any of the following symptoms, it could be a direct result of stress.

- ✓ **Difficulty Sleeping**
- ✓ **Headaches**
- ✓ **Dizziness**
- ✓ **Muscle Pain or Tension**
- ✓ **Sweating**
- ✓ **Loss of Appetite**
- ✓ **Poor Concentration**

These symptoms could have other causes, so it is always advisable to **check with your Doctor or Nurse**.

Everyone reacts to situations in different ways so it is important to identify your triggers and learn to recognise what makes you start to feel stressed or anxious. It could be anything from financial pressures to an assignment deadline, exams or an awkward social interaction. One of the most effective ways to reduce stress is to practice good time management. As tempting as it may be, do not leave all of your course work or study until the last minute, instead aim to have some work or a draft completed in advance. It is often getting started that is the problem and once you have put a few words down or started studying the task may not seem as difficult as you first thought.

It is important to recognise that your diet can have a negative impact on how you are feeling so make sure that you have a balanced diet rather than high sugar, high fat, ready meals or snacks. Caffeine, sugar and energy drinks are not advisable. Taking regular exercise is helpful.

Depression

Depression is a common mental health disorder that causes people to experience **depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration**. Depression is different from feeling down or sad. Unhappiness is something, which everyone feels at one time, or another, usually due to a particular cause. A person suffering from depression will experience intense emotions of anxiety, hopelessness, negativity and helplessness, and the feelings stay with them instead of going away. Depression can happen to anyone.

Alcohol & Mental Health

As alcohol is a depressant drug it is important to be aware of the link between the level of alcohol use and low mood. **Drinking too much can have an effect on your mental health**; feeling slow or sad in the mornings, lacking ambition, avoiding people, and not enjoying everyday things like going for a walk, seeing a movie, or meeting friends. Help is available at **HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline** Freephone **1800 459 459** (Monday to Friday 9:30am-5:30pm) and Email support is available at helpline@hse.ie

Where can I get support?

Many colleges offer free counselling services where you can speak to a trained professional in confidence and discuss any issues. However if you think you are depressed or are finding that your mood is causing serious harm to your health, then its best to speak to your doctor first.

For further support
Aware www.aware.ie
Email: supportmail@aware.ie
The Samaritans www.samaritans.org
Tel: 116 123 (24 hours)
Email: jo@samaritans.org

For more information about mental health visit:
<http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/>

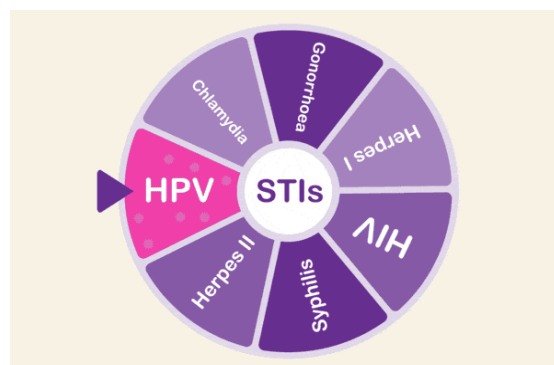
HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline Freephone 1800 459 459
Email: helpline@hse.ie
www.askaboutalcohol.ie
www.drugs.ie
www.oneyearnobeer.com

Sexual Health

Good sexual health means making sure you have the knowledge and ability to make informed sexual choices and act responsibly to protect your health and the health of others. This includes contraception and preventing STIs.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection passed on through sexual contact with someone who is infected. Most STIs pass between sexual partners through unprotected oral, anal or vaginal sex. Some can occur through skin-to-skin contact. Using condoms correctly every time you have sex reduces your risk of getting an STI. Statistics for 2018 indicate a 7% increase in all sexually transmitted infections in Ireland. The two main groups affected are young people aged 15 to 24, and men who have sex with men (MSM).



STI and HIV testing is available free at all public STI clinics throughout Ireland. Testing is also available at many GP clinics, student health centres and other clinics; however, some of these may incur a fee. If you or your partner have any sign of an infection, cuts or sores in the genital area, do not have any form of sex, including oral sex, until you have been tested and treated. Vaccinations are available for some infections contracted through sexual transmission. **Men who have sex with men (MSM)**, are strongly advised to be vaccinated against **Hepatitis A and B** and can also receive the **HPV vaccine free** at STI/GUM clinics.

Be responsible. Practice safe sex. Use condoms



For more information on sexual health and STIs visit:
<https://spunout.ie/health/category/health-sexual-health>
http://www.irishhealth.com/clin/sexual_health/index.html
<https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/>
www.man2man.ie
<https://lgbt.ie/>

Contraception

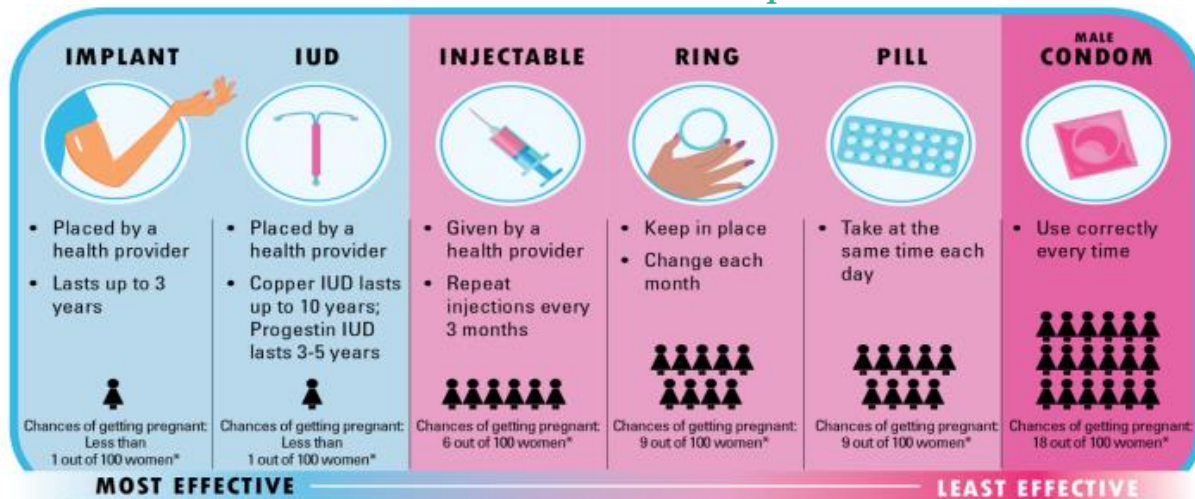
There are many methods of contraception available. It is important to choose contraception that fits your situation and lifestyle. Hormonal contraception for women varies from the pill to long acting reversible contraception (LARC). Remember that using ‘**dual protection**’ condoms with another method of contraception will help you to have safer sex. **Condoms offer the best protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).**

Most student health centres can assist students with their contraception needs.

Many student unions and college health centres provide free condoms.

For more information on contraception visit: <http://www.thinkcontraception.ie/>

Effectiveness of Contraception



Condoms should always be used to prevent STIs

Emergency Contraception

Emergency contraception is now available to buy over the counter at pharmacies. Medical cardholders can get emergency contraception directly from a pharmacy, free of charge, without having to go to their GP for a prescription.

Unplanned Pregnancy. My Options: 1800 828 010

Monday-Friday 9am-9pm. Saturday 10am-2pm

My Options can provide you with information and support on all your unplanned pregnancy options.

For more information visit: <https://www2.hse.ie/unplanned-pregnancy/>

Consent

Consent to sexual activity requires communication to make sure you and your partner understand each other, and agree to have sex. Giving consent and asking for consent is about setting your own personal boundaries and respecting those of the other person. **It is not okay for a person to pressurise someone else to have sex. At any point, both you and your partner have the right to change your mind and withdraw consent.**

What is the legal age of consent?

The law says that a person must be 17 years of age to be able to consent to engaging in a sexual act. This means that a young person under the age of 17 is not legally old enough to consent to a sexual act even if they want to.

For more information on consent visit:

<https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/sexual-health/consent-and-the-law/legal-age-of-consent/>
<https://b4udecide.ie/the-facts/age-of-consent/>

Common Illnesses

Common Cold

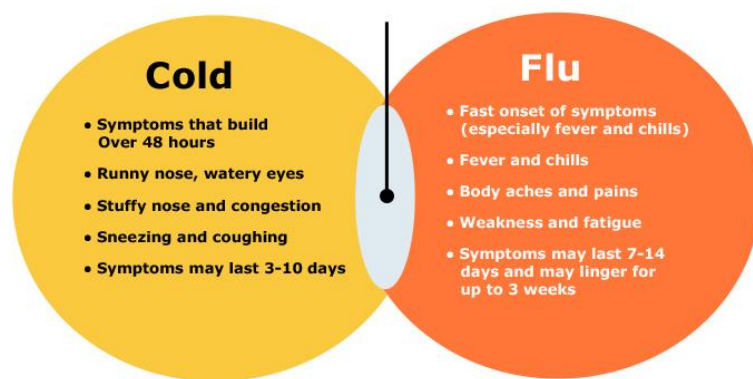
The first symptom of a cold is usually a sore throat. Other symptoms include nasal congestion, discomfort and irritation; sneezing; a nasal discharge (a runny nose): the discharge is usually clear and runny at first before becoming thicker and darker over the course of the infection; coughing; a hoarse voice and a general sense of feeling unwell. Usually, 1 in 3 people with a cold will get a cough and feel unwell. The symptoms of a cold usually peak in severity during the first two to three days of the infection before gradually starting to improve. The symptoms in adults and older children will usually last for about a week.

A virus causes colds and antibiotics cannot treat viruses. In most cases, you will be able to treat the symptoms of a cold yourself at home by using a number of self-care techniques. Drink plenty of liquids, get lots of rest and eat healthily. Paracetamol (within recommended guidelines) and over the counter cold medication can be used for aches, pains and raised temperatures. Speak to the pharmacist.

Flu

Many of the symptoms of flu are similar to those of the common cold, and some people incorrectly refer to a heavy cold as flu. Symptoms of a cold appear gradually, are not severe and usually affect just your nose and throat. Symptoms of flu are more severe, causing fever and aching muscles. You will not be able to do your usual activities. Flu symptoms can begin suddenly.

Seasonal flu can give you any of these symptoms: sudden fever (a temperature of 38°C/100.4°F or above); dry, chesty cough; headache; tiredness; chills; aching muscles; limb or joint pain; diarrhoea or stomach upset; sore throat; runny or blocked nose; sneezing; loss of appetite, and difficulty sleeping. Your symptoms will usually peak after two to three days and you should begin to feel much better within five to eight days. A cough and general tiredness may last for two to three weeks. **A virus causes flu and antibiotics do not work on viruses.**



Students with a chronic illness are advised to get the flu vaccine annually

For more information on colds and flu visit:

<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/cold>

<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/flu>

Cough

Most coughs are caused by colds or flu. Coughs usually come with other symptoms such as a runny nose, fever, sore throat, earache or general aches and pains. Usually you do not need to see the doctor, and most coughs can be treated effectively at home. Talk to your pharmacist, who can give you advice on over the counter remedies that may ease the symptoms of your cough. Cough expectorants, are used for chesty coughs and help bring phlegm up so that coughing is easier. Antibiotics are usually not required. Rest, fluids and taking time to allow your own immune system to fight the infection are very important. Coughing spreads the germs that caused your cough in the first place so it is important not to pass the illness on to others. Avoid spreading the illness by coughing into a tissue, binning the tissue immediately and washing your hands afterwards. Most coughs will clear up within two weeks but may last up to three weeks. **If your cough lasts more than three weeks, you should see your doctor. If you are a smoker, have asthma, have any other chronic lung condition or are immuno-compromised you should get your cough checked out by your doctor.**

For more information on coughs visit:

<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/cough>

Sore Throats

Sore throats are common and not usually serious. Most sore throats are viral in nature, and will clear up within three to seven days without the need for medical treatment. After a week, nearly 9 in 10 people will be well again. Talk to your pharmacist as over-the-counter painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen and local anaesthetic sprays can usually relieve the pain and symptoms of a viral sore throat. Avoid hot food or drink as this could irritate your throat. Eat cool, soft food and drink cool or warm (not hot) liquids. It is also important to rest and avoid exercise to allow your body to heal.

Occasionally bacteria can cause sore throats, and you will feel sicker and take longer to get better. Your immune system may clear the throat infection or you may need an antibiotic.

If you still have a sore throat after two weeks, you should see your doctor

For more information on sore throats visit:
<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/throat>

Earache

Usually, you do not need to see the doctor. However, if you have dizziness, severe headache or your earache does not improve within 24 to 48 hours, it is best to visit your doctor. Ask your pharmacist for advice. You can take over-the-counter medicines to help with the pain and any high temperature. Do not take antibiotics for an ear infection unless your doctor prescribes them. Ear infections, are usually caused by viruses and antibiotics cannot treat viruses.

Ear Discharge: You need to see a doctor to find out what is causing the discharge. **Do not** try to clear the discharge yourself or stick anything, for example a cotton wool bud, into your ear as you may cause damage. Try not to get the affected ear wet until you know what is causing the discharge. If you have an infection of the ear canal, you may need treatment with an antibiotic, or steroid drops. If the problem is wax, your doctor or practice nurse can remove it by gentle suctioning.

For more information about earache visit:
<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/ear>

Warning: Use of ‘Headphones’ and ‘Earbuds’: Turning the volume up and listening for long periods of time through headphones and earbuds can put you in real danger of hearing damage or permanent hearing loss. Doctors recommend the 60%/60-minute rule. Listen to music or play a movie or video game at no more than 60% of the maximum volume. Limit the amount of time you spend with earbuds in your ears to 60 minutes.

Rash

A rash may be caused by an infection, an allergic reaction to something you ate, or skin contact with an irritant. If you have a rash but feel well, it is probably an allergic reaction. The most common type of allergic reaction is urticaria, or hives. Speak to the pharmacist as hives are usually treated with over the counter antihistamines.

If you feel ill along with the rash, it is more likely that you have an infection.

Common viral infections with a rash include **chickenpox, shingles, measles, rubella, hand-foot-mouth and glandular fever**. **Bacteria** can also cause rashes such as **impetigo and cellulitis**. You should consult your doctor to get your rash diagnosed and treated.

Important: If you have a severe headache, vomiting, a high temperature, a stiff neck or sensitivity to light along with the rash, get medical help immediately as these could be signs of meningitis.

Scabies, an intensely itchy rash caused by a parasite, is common among college students. Scabies can spread through prolonged periods of skin-to-skin contact with an infected person, or through sexual contact. Speak to your pharmacist about over the counter treatments. It is important all close contacts are also treated.

For more information about rashes visit:
<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/rash>

Raised Temperature

Normal body temperature is between 36 and 36.8°C (96.8 and 98.24°F) but anywhere from 35.5 ° C to 37.2 °C can be considered normal. A fever in adults is a temperature of **38°C (100.4°F)** or above. A high temperature usually indicates that you have an infection, including common illnesses like a cold or flu. However, a high temperature can also be due to other infections, some of them serious, so it is important to look at other symptoms. Most temperatures clear up within three days. A raised temperature is normal with most mild illnesses however sometimes it can be a cause for concern. If you feel unwell or have a high temperature for more than three days, get medical advice.



Treatment depends on the cause of the fever. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections and the best treatment for most viral illnesses is rest and plenty of fluids. Speak to the pharmacist about over-the-counter medications to lower a raised temperature. The doctor will prescribe antibiotics for certain bacterial infections.

For more information about fevers and raised temperatures visit:
<http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/temperature>

Upset Stomach (Vomiting and Diarrhoea)

Vomiting and diarrhoea can happen on their own or together. When they happen together, it is gastro-enteritis. Gastro-enteritis is caused by contaminated food or close contact with someone who already has symptoms. Vomiting usually lasts between 6 and 12 hours and diarrhoea between 24 and 48 hours. Usually, there is no specific cure and you need to let the illness run its course. Drink plenty of liquids to make sure you do not become dehydrated. Speak to your pharmacist about over the counter treatments if required.

Stay home and rest. Do not eat until 6 hours after the last episode of vomiting. Keep taking sips of clear fluid, preferably water or oral rehydration solutions, which you can get without prescription in your pharmacy. Wash your hands after vomiting or using the toilet to avoid spreading the infection to others. It is best not to return to work or college until at least 12 hours after you have stopped vomiting. Contact your doctor if vomiting lasts more than 12 hours; you notice blood in the vomit or stool; you have been abroad; have bad stomach pain with the vomiting; cannot keep down any liquids or you are on medication for another condition and cannot take it because of the vomiting.



For more information visit: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/tummy>

Health Topics A-Z

The HSE database of over 600 medical conditions and treatments.
For information on any health topic A-Z just click the following link; <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/>
Browse by letter of the alphabet or write the name of the condition and search.

Head Injury and Concussion

Concussion is the sudden but short-lived loss of mental function that occurs after a blow or other injury to the head. The medical term for concussion is minor traumatic brain injury. Concussion can have a significant impact on the short and long-term health of an individual if not managed correctly.

The most common symptoms of concussion are:

- headache
- dizziness
- nausea
- loss of balance
- confusion, such as being unaware of your surroundings
- feeling stunned or dazed
- disturbances with vision, such as double vision or seeing "stars" or flashing lights
- difficulties with memory

It is important to seek medical attention following a head injury or suspected concussion

You should seek **immediate medical attention** for any of the following **emergency symptoms**

Hospital Emergency Department (A&E) immediately or phone 999:

- Unconsciousness, or lack of full consciousness
- Drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour when you would normally be wide awake
- Problems understanding or speaking
- Loss of balance or problems walking
- Weakness in one or more arms or legs
- Problems with your vision
- Painful/ severe headache that won't go away
- Vomiting (being sick)
- Seizures (convulsions or fits)
- Clear fluid coming from the ear or nose
- Bleeding from one or both ears

General advice following a head injury

- **DO NOT** stay unattended or home alone for the first 24/48 hours
- Stay within easy reach of a telephone and medical help
- **DO** rest, and avoid college/physical activity/stressful situations for at least 48 hours
- Ice pack (covered) can be used to reduce any swelling (Haematoma)
- **DO NOT** take any alcohol, drugs, sleeping pills, sedatives or tranquilisers
- Paracetamol (following correct dosage) can be taken for mild headaches if not contra-indicated or allergic to same. Seek medical advice first
- **DO NOT** return to play any contact sport (for example, rugby or football) or partake in any heavy activity without seeking medical advice
- **DO NOT** drive a car, motorbike or bicycle or operate machinery until completely recovered
- A gradual trial of return to school/college/work may be attempted after 48 hours, but **DO** seek medical advice if symptoms persist/worsen

Further information on concussion can be found at:

<https://www.abiireland.ie/concussion-campaign/>

<https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/medical/irfu-concussion-protocols/>

<https://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/Cconcussion-Information-for%20Adult%20Players%202018.pdf>

Vaccinations

Vaccination is currently not mandatory in Ireland, although this may change. If you are in college or starting college this year, you should check to see if you are fully vaccinated. Unvaccinated people are putting themselves and others at risk and more likely to develop serious vaccine preventable illnesses. **Some college health centres provide vaccinations. Check with your health centre for more information.**

MMR vaccine

Many young people have not had two doses of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine so are at risk of developing these illnesses. In Ireland, there has been a large increase in cases of measles in recent years. The majority of confirmed cases were in people who were never vaccinated, or incompletely vaccinated. Most cases of mumps are in young adults under 35. Mumps can cause meningitis, deafness and inflammation of the pancreas or testicles. Measles can cause encephalitis (swelling of the brain) ear infections and pneumonia. **Vaccination with MMR vaccine is the only way to protect against these diseases.**

MenC vaccine

There has been an increase in meningococcal C (MenC) disease in Ireland since 2013. MenC disease is a serious contagious illness. If you have come to college from another country, you should check to see if you have received the MenC vaccine. Meningococcal C can cause meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning). Vaccination with MenC vaccine is the only way to protect against this disease. In Ireland, MenC vaccine is given in GP surgeries at 6 and 13 months of age, and a 3rd dose is given by HSE school teams to 1st years in second level schools, however, MenC vaccine is not given routinely in many countries. If you have not had MenC vaccine, are under 23 years of age, and want to be vaccinated you should contact your doctor or medical provider. The **Meningitis ACWY vaccine known as the 'quadrivalent vaccine'** has been approved to **replace the MenC booster dose** given to 1st years in second level schools from 2019/20. This vaccine provides protection against four types of bacterial meningitis ACY and W-135. Speak to the nurse or doctor who can provide you with more information.

Some college courses (Science, Nursing, Medicine, Dentistry etc.) require students to be vaccinated against **Hepatitis B**. The Hepatitis B vaccine was only introduced into the childhood vaccination programme in Ireland in 2008, so you may need to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

Men who have sex with men (MSM), are strongly advised to be vaccinated against **Hepatitis A and B** and can also receive the **HPV vaccine free** at STI/GUM clinics.

The Flu vaccine is advisable annually for those with a chronic illness

Information about all immunisations is available from your GP, public health nurse or Local Health Office. The HSE's [National Immunisation Office Website](#) and the [Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(HPSC\)](#) have produced useful factsheets on immunisations, in a number of languages.

For more information on vaccination including travel vaccinations visit:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/>
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/child/meningitis>

Travel Vaccination Information Websites

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/t/travel-vaccinations/>
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubininfo/adult/travelvacc/>



The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is very important for your well-being. When you do not get enough sleep, you are more likely to have an accident, injury, or illness. No pills, vitamins or energy drinks can replace a good night's sleep. Consuming caffeine close to bedtime can affect your sleep. Nicotine and alcohol will also interfere with your sleep. When you are sleep deprived, you are as impaired as driving a car after consuming alcohol.

Not getting enough sleep or having sleep difficulties can limit your ability to learn, listen, concentrate and solve problems; contribute to acne and other skin problems; lead to aggressive or inappropriate behaviour; cause you to eat too much or eat unhealthy foods like sweets and fried foods; heighten the effects of alcohol and contribute to illness.

Try to avoid eating, drinking caffeine or alcohol, or exercise within a few hours of bedtime. Despite temptation, do not leave your college work to the last minute then stay up all night cramming for exams or finishing assignments. Try to avoid the TV, computer and telephone in the hour before you go to bed. Stick to quiet, calm activities, and you will fall asleep much more easily.

Speak to your doctor or nurse if you are having sleep difficulties



One last thing! First Aid Box

It is advisable to have a first aid box in your student accommodation.

You can easily make your own first aid box and do not need to spend a lot of money to do so. Many of the items you can get from home or buy cheaply in the euro store.

First Aid Basics:

- Selection of plasters (Band-Aids)
- Bandages: Include small, medium and large bandage
- Non-stick Gauze: To cover larger wounds
- Adhesive Tape: To help secure the gauze or bandage
- Antiseptic Ointment: To prevent infections in a wound or minor burn
- Scissors
- Disposable gloves



For Sprains, Strains and Similar Injuries

- Elastic Bandage: To wrap and provide compression for sprains and strains
- Disposable Ice Pack, or make your own and keep it in the freezer
- Warm Pack or Heating Pad

Other suggested items

- Thermometer
- Eye wash
- Burn gel
- Tweezers

A small selection of over the counter painkillers such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen is useful. Never exceed recommended doses. Do not take Ibuprofen without doctor's orders if you are an asthmatic or allergic to it. Do not keep out of date medication and do not store or share antibiotics or other medications with others.

Emergency (Fire, Ambulance or Police)

Phone 999 or 112

Links to Health Services and Information

Health Topics A-Z

The HSE database of over 600 medical conditions and treatments.

For information on any health topic A-Z just click the link;

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/>

General Health Websites

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/>

<http://www.irishhealth.com/>

<https://patient.info/health>

<http://undertheweather.ie/>

Contraception, STI and Sexual Health

<http://www.thinkcontraception.ie/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/unplanned-pregnancy/>

<https://spunout.ie/health/category/health-sexual-health>

http://www.irishhealth.com/clin/sexual_health/index.html

<https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/>
www.man2man.ie

<https://lgbt.ie/>

Mental Health Websites

<http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/>

<http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie>

<http://www.aware.ie>

<https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Alcohol and Drug related Websites

<http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/change/alcohol/>

<https://www.oneyearnobeer.com/>

<http://www.drugs.ie/>

http://www.drugs.ie/drugs_info/campaign/

<http://www.drugs.ie/DUDIT>

Screening Services Information Website

<https://www.screeningservice.ie/>

Immunisation Information Websites

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/child-health/meningitis-and-septicaemia.html>

Travel Vaccination Information Websites

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/az/t/travel-vaccinations/>

https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pu_binfo/adult/travelvacc/

Nutrition/ Healthy Eating Websites

<https://spunout.ie/health/category/healthyeating>

<https://www.hse.ie/healthyeating>

Medicines Information Online

<http://www.medicines.ie>

Quick links to Common Conditions



Home/Self Care Advice and Treatments

Cold: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/cold>

Flu: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/flu>

Cough: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/cough>

Sore Throat: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/throat>

Earache: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/ear>

Rash: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/rash>

Fever: <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/temperature>

Vomiting <http://undertheweather.ie/ailment/tummy>

Diarrhoea

The College Students Health Guide

Useful Information

- > All students should be registered with their own doctor in Ireland. The college doctor is not your GP.
- > Familiarise yourself with the details and medical services available at your student health centre.
- > Take note of the local Out-of-Hours Doctors number for illnesses that may occur out of college hours.
- > If you have epilepsy, diabetes or an allergy, it is a good idea to wear or carry a medical alert identification.
- > Know your vaccination status, past medical history and if you are allergic to anything especially medication.
- > Not all college health centres accept medical and GP visit cards. Check with your college health centre.
- > Medical records are private and confidential and are not stored as part of the main college records.
- > **E.U. Erasmus Students** are entitled to free medical consultation and doctor prescriptions during their stay in Ireland on presentation of a valid European Health Card.
- > **International Students** should have adequate medical insurance on arrival in Ireland and register with a General Practitioner in the area.
- > **Some medications from abroad are unlicensed in Ireland.** International and EU students on certain medications need to be aware of this and bring their own medication with them throughout their stay.



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ISHA



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Website: <https://www.isha.ie/>

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