

EEK! – the Elon Emergency Healthcare Kit (supplies every student should consider while in college)

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Stocking up to self-manage minor illnesses

As students and parents begin preparation for the upcoming academic year we want to share some important information to include for all students returning to campus, whether a first-year or a returning student. Our advice is based on extensive experience as a physician and medical director, student life dean, and as a parent of a college graduate (who received some of those middle of the night panicked medical calls).

Being at college is the first time students have ever had to take care of themselves, especially their health. We know that often the first thought in preparing for coming to college (or returning for more seasoned students) is NOT an emergency healthcare kit, however our experience indicates having the right supplies on hand can provide more timely relief for minor illnesses and reduce the middle of the night panicked calls when the flu or a norovirus hits! Elon University has an acute injury/illness center staffed by MD/NPs/PA and does **not offer** a 24/7 infirmary, it helps the student if they have some basic items with them to self-administer for minor illnesses, just as they would take at home.

The first step is to help students understand that minor illness is a part of life and the transition to college, and having supplies on hand to self-manage minor illnesses is important. We hope this information will provide you with ideas for “stocking” an emergency health care kit to help students self-manage minor illnesses.

Since every student is different, with different health conditions, and different health cultures, this suggested kit is about categories of treatments and items. Personal preference is important so actual treatment brands are not included, and not all categories may apply to your student. No matter what you include in the student’s kit, it is important to also include some simple advice on how and when to use any items included:

- Headache/fever/ joint and muscle pain
- Diarrhea/constipation/nausea and vomiting
- Skin rashes/insect bites
- Cough and cold/sinus/flu
- Allergies (seasonal/environmental/food/skin)
- Cuts/scrapes/ bruises
- Cold sores
- Sleep issues
- Genito-urinary/UTI/vaginitis
- Anxiety/homesickness
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Hand sanitizer
- Thermometer

- Prescribed medications (NEVER share prescribed medications!)
- Vitamins – Multi/Vit C/Vit D – to maintain health, not treat illness
- Copy of health insurance card/pharmacy card
- Contact details for doctors – specialists and primary care
- Spare glasses/contact lenses/copy of prescriptions for glasses and contacts
- List of prescribed medications with doses and actual names (not “birth control”)
- A written plan for how they obtain refills on prescribed medications
- Contact information for Elon Counseling Services, and Elon Student Health Services
- Fridge/Safe if they will have medications in their room
- Annual flu vaccine (offered on campus in the fall semester and at all local pharmacies)

Note: We recommend students keep these items on hand at all times. However, some of these OTC items are available for purchase on campus at Fountain Market (located in Clohan Hall) and Barnes and Noble (located in Downtown Elon) during their operational hours.

When to “tough it out” and when to seek treatment at Student Health Services or other medical providers:

For most minor illnesses and injuries, students do not need to seek treatment at Student Health Services or other facilities. Many minor illnesses can be managed by the student without medical staff intervention or a visit to Health Services or a medical facility. **However, if a student experiences the following, they should seek emergency assistance immediately by calling 9-1-1:**

- Bleeding that will not stop
- Breathing problems (difficulty breathing, shortness of breath)
- Broken or severely dislocated bones/joints
- Change in mental status (such as unusual behavior, confusion, difficulty arousing)
- Chest pain
- Choking
- Coughing up or vomiting blood
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- The feeling of committing suicide or murder
- Head or spine injury
- Loss of consciousness
- Seizures
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Sudden injury due to a motor vehicle accident, burns or smoke inhalation, near drowning, deep or large wound, etc.
- Sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body
- Sudden dizziness, weakness, or change in vision
- Swallowing a poisonous substance
- Upper abdominal pain or pressure

For guidance on when to seek medical treatment at Student Health Services or another medical facility for a non-emergency condition consult: <https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/cold-guide/when-see-doctor>.

Students can schedule an appointment at Student Health Services by accessing their health portal at <https://www.elon.edu/u/health-wellness/health-services/appointments/>. Many health insurance plans also have a medical consultation service as part of their policy to assist covered persons with questions about illnesses or seeking medical treatment. We recommend students consult with those services if available to them to guide when to seek medical treatment. **Students may also want to consult available telemedicine options, especially if high volume may mean delays in securing an appointment or they become ill at a time when Student Health Services is closed.**

Students and parents can also access additional information about medical and health support resources by visiting the Elon University Student Health Services website at <https://www.elon.edu/u/health-wellness/health-services/> or The Office of The Dean of Students website at <https://www.elon.edu/u/administration/student-life/dean-of-students/>

Sources and resources:

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/centers-for-disease-control-and-prevention>

Elon University Dean of Students website: <https://www.elon.edu/u/administration/student-life/dean-of-students/>

Elon University Student Health Services Website: <https://www.elon.edu/u/health-wellness/health-services/>

Montefiorak/Nyak Health Care: <https://www.montefiorenyack.org/health/handling-medical-emergencies-when-call-911>

WebMd: <https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/cold-guide/when-see-doctor>