

# TALK ABOUT HEALTH

By CollegiateParent



**The pace of college life is invigorating, but it can also be exhausting. Whenever you have the chance, take time to mentor your student in healthy life habits. Here are tips to share and discuss!**

## **Managing stress**

Stress in college doesn't have to be a given. There are many proven ways to manage stress.

- Cardio exercise, yoga and meditation lower stress levels and calm the body and mind. Integrating these practices takes discipline at first but pays off big-time in the long run.
- A daily spiritual practice, being in nature, spending quality time with a friend or journaling are all ways to combat stress.
- Staying organized and managing time are also key in combating stress.

Talk with your student about what has worked for them in the past, and about people you both may know who do a good job leading balanced lives. Encourage your student to integrate at least one stress-busting practice in their daily routine.

## **Eating for optimal health**

In college, students may not eat as well as they did at home. Some talking points:

- Remind your student that eating fast foods, drinking too much caffeine and consuming lots of sugar will only serve to make them feel sluggish and can weaken the immune system, leading to illness.
- Encourage your student to seek out fresh fruit and veggies, eat breakfast and try not to skip meals.

- Keeping healthy snacks on hand — cheese, nuts, seeds, protein bars — can help them maintain normal levels of blood sugar and stave off binge-eating.
- Taking daily vitamins and drinking plenty of water are also good nutritional habits.

## **Sleep is key**

It's normal for students to experience disruptions to their sleep schedule in college. There are ways to facilitate a good night's sleep and productive day:

- Establish a bedtime routine.
- Work at a desk instead of the bed.
- Turn off screens.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, soda and hardcore snacking before bed.
- Limit all-nighters.

## **Abstain or limit alcohol intake**

Drinking is a major health concern on college campuses and increases the risk for accidents, sexual assault, violence, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and poor academic performance. Talk with your student about drink limits. If they are underage, encourage them to wait to drink as there are legal consequences for underage drinking. Help your student establish healthy boundaries and talk about alternatives to drinking alcohol.

If your student chooses to drink, educate them on the dangers of binge drinking — for females that's four or more drinks and for males five or more drinks in a short period of time. Pre-gaming is a common practice on college campuses that can lead to all sorts of unfavorable outcomes for students. The more they know about drugs and alcohol, the more likely they are to make wise choices.

## **Know your resources**

College campuses offer health and resource centers to address most of your student's needs. If you are able to visit campus, familiarize yourself with where everything is and what's offered; browse the website, too. Talking with your student about what is available can empower them to reach out and get help if needed.



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