**Health and Wellbeing:**

In the midst of a hectic college life, it’s very easy to forget to look after your personal health. But did you know that if you plan everything right and take good care of yourself you will feel so much better. And you can have a stress-free college life to boo. Taking responsibility for our own health and having the know-how fully equips us to get the most out of life. There are many factors that enable us to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Follow these simple instructions to bring some of the fun and vitality back into your life.

**Alcohol and Drugs:**

While the party scene at college may seem very appealing and an excellent opportunity to meet new people, know your limits. Always drink at your own pace, whatever you are comfortable with. If you don’t want to have that extra pint of beer, then don’t, just say no. And remember, your friends will secretly respect you for having the strength to set your own limits. Drinking a pint of water in between drinks is another great way of slowing down the absorption of alcohol. Always plan how you’re going to get home before going out and ensure your own and your friends’ safety.

Quote at side “Safe and sensible drinking means your hangovers won’t be as bad”.

Greater exposure to drugs may also occur on the party circuit and you are likely to witness drug misuse during your student years. However, knowing the facts is an important step towards increasing your capacity to say no. Remember, you do not have to follow the crowd. Drugs misuse can interfere with many areas of your life such as:

Academic performance Relationships

Mental Health Mood/Concentration

Mixing drugs and alcohol is a very dangerous thing to do and may result in some unwanted consequences. Drug addiction is a very easy trap to fall into if you are not careful and always be aware that it can happen to anyone.

If you would like more information about drug use or are concerned about a friends drug use please contact………….

**Healthy Eating and Physical Activity**

It is necessary for students to remember to allow the time to eat healthily, get fresh air and exercise. This is very important to fight off colds and other infections. It will also help your college performance by keeping a clear and focused mind. We are here if you need any advice on healthy eating or dieting.

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**Don’t skip breakfast**. Even if you roll out of bed at the last minute for class, make sure you grab a piece of fruit to eat while getting to the lectures.

**Buy and Prepare your own food**. It will be much cheaper and healthier than relying on ready-made, convenience foods.

**Stay hydrated:** Proper hydration is important for healthy skin and organs. Drink eight glasses of water a day.

**Healthy Snacks**. Make your own lunch and bring it to college with you. This will help you save money and guarantee a healthy lunch.

**Fruit and Vegetables:** We should all be eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day. They still count whether they are fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced. Use the food pyramid.

**Fast food:** Limit your intake of high fat/salt foods. Choose to eat a lean protein source, vegetables and salads.

**Don’t overdo caffeine:** Limit your intake of stimulants such as coffee, tea, chocolate and coke.

**Limit alcohol consumption:** Alcohol has no nutritional value.

**Variety of foods:** Try to eat a variety of foods, share different recipes with friends and don’t skip meals.

**Other Random Tips:**

If all your friends decide to order a takeaway, there’s no need to stand at the side-lines looking on in envy. With a few simple adjustments you can enjoy a takeaway guilt free. Here’s how.

When ordering a pizza, opt for a thin base crust as opposed to a thick base.

When ordering a Chinese, swap fried rice for boiled rice and avoid calorie laden sauces where possible. Food like prawn crackers are heavily deep-fried so be mindful of how many of them you eat!!

When ordering an Indian, simply opt for a biriani or a vegetable based dish and watch that naan bread.

**Smart food for exams:**

Like a car or an athlete, a student needs fuel to study efficiently and perform their best in an exam. You need to give yourself the best chance to do well and eating the best food before an exam or during study will maximise those chances.

There are certain foods that are known to increase brain power and give long lasting energy so that you can write as much as possible in that long exam.

**During Study Time:**

Tip: Create a study timetable and build in meal/snack times in between sessions.

Why? The brain uses 20% of the body’s energy levels. Maintaining glucose levels in between study sessions will increase concentration levels. Eating regularly throughout the day will keep glucose levels up.

**For early morning exams:**

Tip: Do not skip breakfast. If you are unable to eat – try a smoothie instead. Make sure your breakfast is high in fibre. Porridge, Fried breakfast, toast and cereal are all good examples.

Why? Lack of energy can result in inability to recall, focus and remember key fact, dates etc during an exam.

**For afternoon exams:**

Tip: Eat a lunch that has a balance of protein and carbohydrates. Examples include chicken and pasta, Tuna wrap, Vegetable soup with a wholemeal scone.

Why? Eating a carbohydrate and protein together slowly releases energy over a long period of time. This allows you to get through a long exam and still feel fresh.

**Vitamins:**

A lack of certain vitamins can lead to fatigue, poor skin, teeth and bones and in some cases of severe deficiency, it can lead to serious illness. Vitamins interact with other nutrients in processes such as metabolism, digestion and developing blood cells and some vitamins are said to slow down the ageing process, prevent cancerous cells attacking the body and strengthen the immune system. Many vitamins are found in fruit and vegetables. Ideally, these food sources should be eaten raw, as vitamins can be lost or partially lost through the cooking process.

Minerals such as calcium, zinc and potassium are needed by the body for a number of processes such as breaking down, digesting and releasing energy from food, strengthening bones, nails and teeth and regulating fluid and cholesterol in the body.

**Fluids/Hydration:**

Water is required for practically every bodily function. If the body does not have an adequate supply of water through a daily intake of fluids, it will draw on sources from within the body. This in turn will cause the body to shut down, as the cells become dehydrated from a lack of water.

The body needs on average of liquid a day. Two litres of liquid should be made up of water or other fluids, whilst one litre of water usually comes from the food that we eat. It is best to drink water, as water is the most effective at replenishing lost fluids, although other liquids such as skimmed milk, soup or unsweetened fruit juices will also suffice.

Take a look at our super healthy eating plate below.



Starting anew in college means that many students are living away from home for the first time and suddenly find themselves’ having to cook. It is not uncommon to find this a highly daunting prospect at first, but with the right tools at your disposal this need not be an experience fraught with tension. All you need to do is acquaint yourself with a few simple, healthy and convenient recipes and you will slowly begin to find the cook in you. And don’t forget about your five a day either.

Listed below are a few simple recipes that you can follow accompanied by a step by step guide.

*Recipes from student recipes.ie*

**Physical Activity:**

Entering a whole new world with nobody to guide you, it can be very easy to slip into a sedentary way of life. So amidst all the glitz and glamour of a party lifestyle why not grab a friend and go out for a sociable brisk walk. Physical activity is key to a healthy and active life and the benefits to you knows’ no bounds. Just thirty minutes a day results in the release of endorphins, the feel-good hormones. Self-esteem and mood can also be boosted in this way leading to a fab new you. And if that’s not enough to motivate you, plenty of exercise can also help in areas such as weight management and reducing your risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

A few minor alterations to your daily life can make all the difference.

 Walk instead of drive where possible.

 If you are travelling by bus, get off a few stops before your destination and walk the rest of the way. Go on, I bet you will begin to see improvements almost immediately.

 Take the stairs instead of the elevator.

 If you have a long lunch break, why not go for a walk and a breath of fresh air. Sound appealing??

**Your mental health**

Commencing college is a brand new phase of life and for many students there is a period of transition required to settle in. The pressure of exam deadlines, meeting new people, living away from home and financial worries can all take their toll. It is okay to feel like everything is getting on top of you and remember that you are not alone.

**Exam/Essay Deadlines:**

Plan your studying well in advance so that you do not end up cramming everything in at the last minute. Don’t leave essays to do until the night before, you will not reach your maximum potential and any number of things could go wrong. If you are unsure of what is required of a particular set essay, contact your course tutor for advice.

In the busy run up to exams, make sure to drink plenty of water as this will help your concentration levels, eat lots of fruit and vegetables, and get plenty rest. Locate any past exam papers if they are available and do a good practice run all the while carefully managing your time. Look out for any study tips workshops around campus and avail of these. Take some time to engage in some gentle exercise every day to relieve stress and anxiety. This will also help to clear your mind and enable you to study better. Finally, always take the time to relax and have fun away from the books, and don’t pull an all-nighter, you will need your brain to be working for the exam.

**Meeting new people:**

At college, you will be meeting a whole new set of people and this may seem overwhelming and difficult to do. Smile, make eye contact and just watch as a whole new world of friends opens up to you. Don’t be afraid to join some clubs and societies which is a great way of meeting new people with similar interests.

**Living away from home:**

Living away from home can seem a daunting prospect at first and it may take some time to adjust. A whole new environment to contend with, new housemates on top of catering for yourself may harbour feelings of stress and loneliness. This is all perfectly normal and you are certainly not alone. Get involved in some clubs and societies to meet new people and make the most out of university life. However, if these feelings persist do not continue to suffer in silence. Make contact with the counselling support and development service and arrange an appointment with one of our staff members today.

**Financial Worries:**

Prepare for financial planning to become a major part of your life throughout your student years. You have to budget for rent, food, bills, college fees, petrol, car insurance, car tax, bus money AND you want to have a social life. Well say a big welcome to the new grown up you. It is best to begin by making a list of all your expenses for a particular period of time (for one month for example) and then making a list of your incoming finances and check for any discrepancies. If there are, look for any areas that you might be able to cut back on (do you need to buy that course textbook or can you get a copy from the library or online?).

Financial worries can also result in heightened levels of stress and anxiety and if you are struggling to manage your expenses get in touch with us here at the college. Financial worries can have a significant impact on your mental health and do not suffer in silence if this is a major issue affecting you.

**Smoking**

The onset of smoking typically occurs during adolescence and the behaviours established during these years tend to be difficult to break. All hope is not lost, however, as you will see from the statistics below that the benefits from quitting smoking are instant.

**20 minutes after quitting:**

Your heart rate and blood pressure drop.

**12 hours after quitting:**

The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

**2 weeks to three months after quitting:**

Your circulation improves and your lung function increases.

**1 to 9 months after quitting:**

Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) start to regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs and reduce the risk of infection.

**1 year after quitting:**

The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker’s.

**5 years after quitting**

Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus and bladder are cut in half. Cervical cancer risk falls to that of a non-smoker. Stroke risk can fall to that of a non-smoker after 2-5 years.

**10 years after quitting:**

The risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a person who is still smoking. The risk of cancer of the larynx (voice box) and pancreas decreases.

**15 years after quitting:**

The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker’s.

These are just a few of the benefits of quitting smoking for good. Quitting smoking lowers the risk of diabetes, lets blood vessels work better, and helps the heart and lungs. Quitting while you are younger will reduce your health risks more, but quitting at any age can give back years of life that would be lost by continuing to smoke.

When you have made the decision to quit, it is very important that you gain access to the right support and services. You will need to be helped through all the stages of quitting.

**Personal Life**

Away at University, as well as receiving an academic education, you are also getting an education in your own personal development. You will be living away from home for the first time, meeting a wide array of new people and becoming an adult. You will probably find that your friends will gradually become more important to you but family members will remain important.

Friends:

At university, it is easy to feel intimidated and shy being surrounded by so many larger than life students. You may initially find it difficult to fit in and make friends. That’s okay and you are certainly not alone in this. Give it time, join some clubs and societies, make some friends and you will eventually find the home for you.

Family:

Being separated from family members for the first time is for the most part an experience unique to university life. Many students may experience homesickness for the first time. Missing home is a perfectly normal reaction to a new environment and these feelings, while they are unpleasant, they will go away. Be sure to keep in regular contact with your family, but do assess whether going home for visits’ does more harm than good. Going home all the time may exacerbate the homesickness.

Relationships:

Intimate relationships are a great source of happiness when everything is going well, but every relationship is fraught with ups and downs. They require give and take on both sides and they take time and effort. Below are some useful tips to help make your relationship run a little bit smoother.

Accept each other’s differences. Make individual choices.

Accept that the other person cannot always meet every single one of your needs or solve all your problems; you are still responsible for you.

Operate in the present, don’t repeatedly pick over past events or live with hope it will be better at a later date.

Share positive feelings by doing something kind or loving to share happy moments.

Be skillful in your negotiating when you experience disagreements.

Make time for your friends.

**Sexual Health:**

Sexual health is a major part of college life, however it is essential that you protect yourself from STD’s and unwanted pregnancies.

 **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**: Undiagnosed STD’s can lead to long term health complications such as infertility and pelvic pain if left untreated. And remember, a staggering number of STD’s have no symptoms so you may not even know you have one. So please get yourself checked out if you think you might be at risk. Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and HPV are among the most common infections to watch out for and while they are common STD’s, they can be treated with a simple course of antibiotics. There are many sexual health centres in your area and your confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed.

 **Pregnancy:** During your student years, it may so happen that you find yourself with a pregnancy that you did not plan or want. Your funds may be low, you may be too busy with college work and perhaps you do not have the capacity to bring a baby into an environment that you would like. Before making any hasty decisions however, it is wise to explore all your options. Contact the health professionals in the college who will be able to point you in the right direction. You will need a lot of support and guidance to help you through this crisis so make sure you avail of it.