

AUGUST 2024

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA **MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING STUDENT NEWSLETTER**

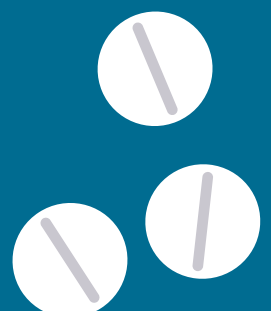


Hi UC students,

A big welcome to any new students who have started studying at UC or who are living on Ressies for the first time. We hope you are all staying warm and keeping well!

In this newsletter we will focus on:

- The rise of respiratory illnesses over the past few months
- The importance of regular health checks
- Taking care of your mental health
- The importance of physical activity on your general health
- Changes to vaping in Australia

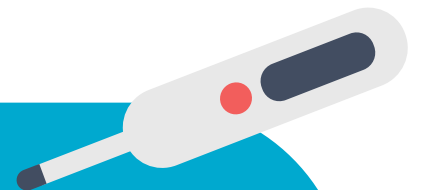


RISE OF RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS

Over the past few months, we have seen a considerable rise in people suffering from respiratory illnesses especially the influenza virus, the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and the latest variant of the COVID-19 virus.



What can you do to help prevent becoming unwell this winter?



If you have not had an **influenza vaccination** this winter, we highly recommend that you get one from UC Medical and Counselling Centre. It is not too late to get one. There is no cost to you for the vaccination. You need an influenza vaccination every year to stay protected from the latest strains of influenza impacting our winter. It is not too late to do this.

COVID-19 BOOSTERS.

We no longer talk about the number of COVID vaccines an individual has had to determine if someone is eligible for a COVID booster.



The general advice is that everyone should have a booster dose of the new COVID vaccine (XBB) which has been available for the past year now. The Australian Department of

Health and Aged Care have devised a **COVID booster eligibility tool** to help you decide if a booster is recommended for you.

RSV

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is normally an illness that we associate with babies and young children, however adults can also get sick with RSV. The symptoms of RSV infection in adults are like lots of other respiratory viruses with sore throat runny nose, cough, mild fevers and fatigue.



How to stay well

Influenza, COVID and RSV are all very infectious meaning that they spread easily from one person to another through tiny droplets made when the ill person, coughs, sneezes or even talks. These droplets can either be breathed in or they can be transferred to another person's nose, mouth or eyes by the droplets being on a surface which is then touched by the well person.

The best way to reduce the risk of becoming unwell is to practice good hygiene.

- Stay home if you are unwell – staying home is the best way to prevent the spread of any virus. Please don't attend classes.
- If you do need to go out when you are sick, wear a mask and keep your distance from others. Avoiding close contact with others prevents others from getting sick.
- Hand hygiene: Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after eating and after visiting the bathroom.
- Sneeze/cough into your elbow, not your hand.
- If you need to blow your nose, dispose of any used tissues in a bin and sanitise your hands afterwards.
- Do not visit high risk settings (such as hospitals or aged care facilities) or people at higher risk of severe illness. This includes babies, infants, older people, and those who are immunocompromised.

If you are unwell and need to see a Dr at UC Medical and Counselling Centre, please ring Reception on **6201 2351** and let them know what your symptoms are.

Depending on your circumstances, a telehealth appointment with a Dr may be recommended instead of a face-to-face appointment.

If you are coming to the Centre to see a Dr or a nurse and you are unwell, please make sure that you are wearing a mask. If you don't have a mask, please ask for one as soon as you arrive.

If you have already done a RAT for COVID and it was positive, please don't come to the Centre. Instead, please ring Reception, and organise a telehealth appointment with Dr.

If you are unwell, please do not attend any appointments with the Psychologists. Contact reception and ask for your appointment to be changed to a telephone call with the psychologist instead.

For information on how to book an appointment with a Dr or Psychologist or speak to a nurse for medical advice, please go to the [last page](#) of the newsletter.



The importance of regular health checks

How often do you visit the Doctor? Is it only when you are injured or feeling sick? This process seems to be the societal norm, though regular health checks are more important than you might think.

Regular health checks can help to identify early warning signs of disease or illness. Conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers can often be picked up in their early stages, when treatment has a better chance at being successful. A discussion about medical history, your family history of disease and your lifestyle will most likely occur during one of these checks. Particularly if you have a family history of a certain condition, regular health checks will ensure early warning signs are identified should they appear.

A regular visit to the doctor, even if you are healthy, is important to:

- Check for current or emerging medical problems
- Assess your risk of future medical issues
- Prompt you to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Update vaccinations

You can be conducting regular health checks at home too! Some basic ways to review your health include assessing:

- **Alcohol:** limiting alcohol consumption to no more than 2 standard drinks per day and having 2 alcohol-free days per week leads to better long-term health
- **Dental Care:** clean your teeth and floss regularly. Limiting sugar intake can also reduce the risk of tooth decay and gum disease. Visit a dentist at least once a year for a dental examination and professional cleaning
- **Diet:** consume a healthy diet with at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables per day to improve general health and wellbeing
- **Physical activity:** aim for 30 minutes to an hour of moderate physical activity per day for your mental health, physical health, and bones. E.g. brisk walk, gentle swim, social tennis
- **Skin checks:** check your skin for unusual moles or freckles and see your doctor if you notice anything unusual. This is particularly important for people who work outdoors
- **Smoking:** if you smoke, quitting as soon as possible helps reduce the risk of diseases such as heart disease, stroke, lung disease and thin bones
- **Weight:** prevent diseases such as diabetes and arthritis by maintaining a healthy weight



Mental Health

According to the Department of Health and Aged Care, mental health is a state of wellbeing that enables you to deal with what life throws at you. It is about feeling resilient, enjoying life and being able to connect with others.

Did you know that almost half of all Australian adults will face mental ill-health at some point in their lives? That's 7.3 million people!

When in a state of mental ill-health, it can be more difficult to handle stress, make decisions and maintain work, relationships, and physical health. With factors out of your control such as significant life changes, hormonal changes, trauma, and major stress contributing to mental ill-health, it can be extremely difficult to manage.

Although some contributing factors are outside of your control, there are many factors that are preventable. Some ways to prevent mental ill-health factors are:

- Reducing drug and alcohol use
- Reducing cigarette smoking (if you are a smoker)
- Eating healthily
- Exercising regularly
- Getting adequate sleep



Did you know mental ill-health in Winter can be directly related to the change in seasons? The shorter days and reduced level of sunlight in Winter may disrupt your body's internal clock, decreasing serotonin and melatonin levels in the body. Also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder, these physiological functions can lead to feelings of depression.

It's normal to feel down some days but if symptoms such as low motivation to do activities you once enjoyed, appetite changes, sleep changes and feeling sad most days persist, it is important to seek help as soon as possible. UC students can access free appointments with the Psychologists at UC Medical and Counselling Centre.

There are a variety of other online and in person resources available to assist with these feelings.

- **Access Mental Health** 1800 629 354 – available 24 hours, 7 days a week
- **UC Crisis Line** – 1300 271 790 or text on 0488 884 227
- **Lifeline** – 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline** – 1800 55 1800 (Ages 5 – 25)
- **NSW Mental Health Line** – 1800 011 511
- **Beyond Blue** – 1300 224 636
- **Mensline** – 1300 789 978



Physical Activity for your General Health

Did you know that 1 in 2 adults (aged 18 to 64) don't meet the physical activity guidelines?

From 20th – 26th of May, it was 'Exercise Right Week'. This week is to inspire and inform Australians to move more. Exercising does not always have to be an intense session of cardio, leaving you out of breath and out of energy. Exercise can mean different things to different people. If you do not enjoy exercise, it is likely that you just haven't found the type of exercise that works for you.

- Maintaining an exercise routine cannot be left to motivation, but rather an understanding of its health and wellbeing benefits.
- Exercise reduces the risk of many health problems such as anxiety, depression, heart disease, type 2 diabetes etc.
- Maintains or improves blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
- Reduces the risk of some types of cancers
- Maintains strong muscles and bones
- Prevents unhealthy weight gain
- Creates opportunities for socialising and meeting new people

Some easy ways to incorporate more activity into your day include:

- Using the stairs instead of the lifts.
- Parking further away from your destination and walking.
- Enjoying a walk during the day.
- Doing lunges or walking around when on the phone.

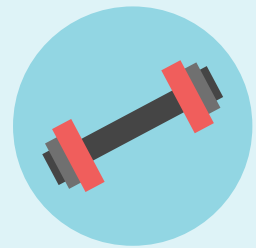
It's time to move away from an 'all or nothing' approach, as any exercise is better than none. If you currently do not exercise at all, start with a small amount each week, then build up to the desired guidelines.

MUSCLE STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR GENERAL HEALTH

While aerobic activities are important, muscle strengthening activities that improve strength, endurance and size of skeletal muscle is also encouraged for 2 days per week.

Muscle strengthening activities can include:

- Push-ups
- Pull-ups
- Squats or lunges
- Lifting weights
- Household tasks that involve lifting, carrying, or digging



WHY DO I NEED TO DO MUSCLE STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES?

Muscle strength is required for many daily activities such as climbing stairs, housework, and gardening. As well as helping you with these activities, muscle strength will help to protect your joints from injury, improve your mobility and balance, decrease your risk of injury, and improve stamina.

Did you know?

These strengthening activities will not only improve your muscle strength, but also your bone strength! Strong, healthy bones reduce your risk of developing chronic conditions such as osteoporosis (where bones become weak and break more easily).

CHANGES TO VAPING IN AUSTRALIA FROM 1 JULY 2024

On the 1st of July changes to VAPING came into effect. The *Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Act 2024* has put in place nationally consistent rules around the importation, manufacture, commercial possession, and advertising of all vapes.

CHANGES INCLUDE:

- Vapes can only be sold at pharmacies regardless of whether they contain nicotine or not.
- Tobacconists, vape shops and convenience stores cannot sell any type of vapes.

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WHO VAPE

- **About vaping and e-cigarettes** – information about what e-cigarettes are, health risks, vaping laws, what we're doing to protect people from the harms of vaping, and information and support to quit vaping.
- **'Give Up For Good'** – videos and resources to help encourage people to give up smoking and vaping for good.



STUDENT HEALTH AT THE UC MEDICAL AND COUNSELLING CENTRE

The UC Medical and Counselling Centre is committed to ensuring student physical and mental health remains a priority area throughout the year.

With a professional team of psychologists available from 9am–5pm Monday–Friday, Medical and Counselling is well equipped to assist any students requiring mental health support. Whether you are struggling with relationship breakups, workload, traumatic incidents or depression, our psychologists are here to help. Psychology services are confidential, FREE and available exclusively to all currently enrolled UC students with no referral required.

As well as psychologists, the Medical and Counselling team is made up of:

- Medical Practitioners
- Visiting Psychiatrist
- Registered Nurses

Appointments can be made by calling **02 6201 2351**, by booking through **HotDoc**, or visiting the centre and speaking to our reception staff.

Do you require more information about how to deal with specific mental or physical health concerns?

[Click here](#) to access specific resources from the Medical and Counselling Centre.

Emergency Contacts for mental health include:

- Lifeline Phone: **131 114**
- Mental Health Crisis Service Phone: **1800 629 354**
- University of Canberra 24-hour Crisis Line Phone: **1300 271 790** or Text: **0488 884 227**

24-hour contacts to keep in mind:

- **6201 2222**
UC Security
- **131 444**
Police assistance
- **1800 737 732**
National Sexual Assault Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- **02 6280 0900**
Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- **02 5124 2185**
Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care
- **1300 224 636**
Beyond Blue
- **1300 78 99 78**
MensLine Australia
- **1800 184 527**
QLife
- **1800 629 354**
Access Mental Health

OTHER SUPPORTS

Citizen Centred Justice Clinic

Provides free legal advice on a variety of issues including:

- Housing
- Financial matters
- Addressing scams
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Handling divorce cases
- Addressing citizenship issues
- Managing employment situations within the community, such as addressing pay parity for international students.

Appointments are available every Wednesday and can be booked through the UC Medical and Counselling Centre: Building 1, Level B. Phone: 02 6201 2351.

Student Wellbeing and Support

Can assist with:

- Transition and first year support
- Accommodation and safe housing
- Financial Support
- Navigating Study

Contact: wellbeing@canberra.edu.au

International Student Support

Can assist with:

- Settling into life at UC and Canberra
- Programs that aim to enhance your study experience, health and wellbeing
- Understanding your student visa requirements and what is expected of you
- Tailored support for Australia Awards students
- Under-18 student welfare and accommodation needs
- Connections to other key services at UC and within the community
- Additional support for students

Contact: InternationalStudent@canberra.edu.au

UC Thrive and Student Mentor Program

Provides targeted and individualised peer-led support for commencing students through a scaffolded 8-week transition program.

Contact: ucthrive@canberra.edu.au

Multi-faith support

- Multi-faith and Chaplaincy

Contact: Chaplaincy@canberra.edu.au

Study Skills

Provides a range of face-to-face and online study help programs for UC students to assist with academic goals. These include:

- Drop in Study Help session
- Peer-Assisted Learning Sessions (PALS)
- The Maths and Stats Help Centre
- The ASK Advisors
- Study Skills English Language Support
- EndNote and Mahara support
- Referrals for Study Skills individual consultations etc.

Contact: studyskills@canberra.edu.au or by phone on 02 6201 2205.

For self-paced online resources and further information about Study Skills programs and services, visit the Study Help UCLearn (Canvas) site (log-in required).



TRAINING, COURSES AND GROUPS

BYSTANDER TRAINING

A free workshop on identifying safe and effective strategies to combat common bystander situations. Students will explore how challenging situations effect our perception and decision-making and offers techniques for taking clear action under pressure.

Register at:
events.humanitix.com/ucmcc-bystander-training

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Join an early intervention training program on responding to someone experiencing a mental health problem or crisis. Led by a Licensed instructor, this is a practical skills-based program that equips people with the skills needed to face these situations with confidence.

Register at: events.humanitix.com/mhfa-uc-students

'ACT FOR ANXIETY' GROUP

A FREE, six-week group program informed by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for students struggling with anxiety. This groups aims to provide you with skills and strategies to better manage your anxiety and to improve your day-to-day life.

Your psychologist or GP at **UC Medical and Counselling** may refer you to the group. You are also welcome to contact UC Medical and Counselling reception to book an intake appointment.

THE WEEKLY PSYCH SESSION

This is a FREE weekly psych skill workshop for UC students. Run in person and online, learn a new set of skills and tools to improve your wellbeing and coping skills.

Register at: events.humanitix.com/weekly-psych-session

CITIZEN CENTRED JUSTICE CLINIC

If you have a problem with your employment, discrimination, workplace bullying, housing, immigration, family or custody matters, violence, sexual assault or other matters causing you concern, the UC Medical and Counselling Centre offers a free confidential legal service for UC students and staff on Wednesdays.

Book a face-to-face or telephone appointment through the UC Medical and Counselling Centre **02 6201 2351**

EMOTIONAL SKILLS GROUP

This group aims to provide you with skills and strategies to manage emotions and communicate effectively. The content is informed by resources from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and will include mindfulness and strategies to manage/tolerate distress, understand and manage emotions and interpersonal skills.

Your psychologist or GP at **UC Medical and Counselling** may refer you to the group. You are also welcome to contact UC Medical and Counselling reception to book an intake appointment.

Keep an eye out for our next issue.

On behalf of the UC Medical & Counselling Centre, **stay safe everyone!**