

Physical Wellness

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the relationship between physical health and optimal student performance and describe some best practices and resources that can help you to stay healthy. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Caring for Your Physical Well-Being

For a student in higher education, taking a proactive approach to caring for your physical well-being is essential. Once again, a key difference between high school and higher education in this regard is that in college you are more likely to be on your own when it comes to taking care of yourself.

There is no required gym class or regularly scheduled lunch period. Students who live on-campus no longer have parents to monitor their sleeping, eating, and exercise habits. Students who take online courses can do their coursework in a sedentary state, without ever having to leave their rooms.

This means that it is up to you to reflect on and implement strategies for staying healthy in your daily routine. Good physical health is not just a universally positive goal; it's also specifically crucial to achieving optimal student performance.

2. Good Physical Health and Optimal Student Performance

You might think that your physical health and your education are two separate spheres of your life. However, if you want to fully optimize your potential for success in higher education, it's time to consider the relationship between your health and your education.

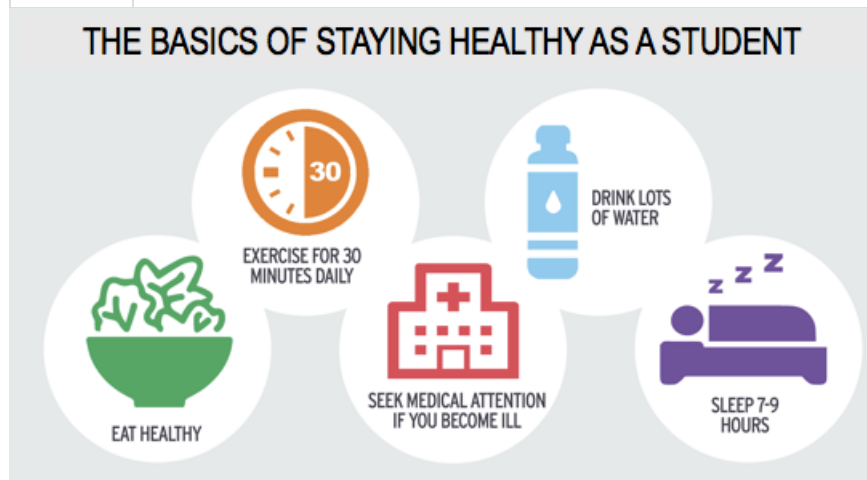
While it's true that college is generally a place to exercise your mind and not your body, it's also true that your mind works best when your body works best. Eating right, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly will not only keep your body in good shape but will keep your energy level up when it's time to study and maximize your ability to focus on your work.

Conversely, eating poorly or not at all and not getting enough sleep or exercise can really hinder your capacity to pay attention and think clearly. Optimization means performing to the upper limits of your potential, and that entails working to rethink aspects of your lifestyle that might be slowing you down at school.

This does not mean you need to train like a world-class athlete in order to boost your GPA. After all, that would leave you with little time to study, but little adjustments to your routine can make a big difference.

Some basic steps you can take toward a healthy lifestyle include:

Step Toward Healthy Lifestyle	Description
Exercise for 30 minutes daily	Committing at least 30 minutes a day—either all at once or in two or three short intervals—to some form of physical activity. This could mean going to the gym or simply taking a walk, as long as you’re able to set aside time to be active.
Eat healthily and drink lots of water	In terms of your eating habits, it’s not necessary to go on a crash diet or fast—simply think about how healthier choices, moderation, and staying hydrated will keep you feeling better and more energetic.
Sleep 7–9 hours	The same goes for getting enough sleep; different people need different amounts of sleep to function at a high level, but the generally recommended amount of sleep is 7-9 hours a night. Recall that studies have shown that “cramming” for exams at the expense of sleep has adverse results on student performance. You are not going to maximize absorption and retention of your course materials if you are dozing off at your desk—in class or at home.
Seek medical attention if you become ill	It's important that you seek appropriate medical help when you aren't feeling well. Neglecting to take care of ailments, big or small, is definitely going to be an obstacle to optimal performance at school.



THINK ABOUT IT

If you’re still skeptical about the relationship between physical health and student performance, here is an excerpt from the conclusions of a 2017 study conducted by Stanford University’s Center for Education

University students would not be very active if they did not engage in recreational physical activity as they spend most of their time sitting in lectures or studying. Even though evidence from neuroscience suggests positive short- and long-term effects of exercising on brain functioning, little is known about the productivity-enhancing effects of physical activity. This paper contributes to the literature by identifying the effects of physical activity on students' educational performance... [The] results indicate that integrating studying and exercising during the day may enhance the productivity of study time and thus improve students' performance... Our study suggests that physical activity is an under-explored factor in the human capital production function. In particular, on-campus exercise can contribute to the educational objectives of universities... While our results cannot speak to the benefits of extravagant facilities such as water parks or to the relative benefits compared to academic spending, they suggest that providing basic opportunities for students to exercise on campus contributes to the educational objectives of universities.

3. Wellness Centers

Your school might have facilities that can help you maintain a healthy lifestyle. Colleges and universities that have significant campuses will typically have at least one gym or recreation center with exercise equipment and facilities available to students.

A more recent development is the wellness center—an on-campus facility aimed at a holistic approach to student health. A wellness center combines traditional workout facilities with a focus on other aspects of student health. This can include meditation or yoga classes, mental health counseling, education and treatment regarding drugs and alcohol or sexual health, immunization and emergency medical treatment, cafés with healthy food, and more.

Basically, colleges and universities realize that a range of resources and services pointed at student wellness enriches the higher learning experience.

IN CONTEXT

What if you are a student at an online university or a small technical college that doesn't have a gym, let alone a wellness center?

Different schools have different resources, and not every student will have access to these kinds of facilities. You might have to be a little more resourceful, but you can still reflect on and make adjustments to your lifestyle.

What if you have a physical disability that severely limits your ability to remain physically active?

Whatever your circumstances might be, do your best within your means to make healthy choices.



SUMMARY

Caring for your physical wellbeing by keeping yourself in good physical health will help you optimize your student performance. Exercising regularly, eating healthy, drinking water, getting plenty of

sleep, and taking care of yourself when you are ill are the basics you should practice, as well as researching the services provided by **wellness centers**.



ATTRIBUTIONS

- [The Effect of Physical Activity on Student Performance in College: An Experimental Evaluation](#) | **Author:** Hans Fricke, Michael Lechner, and Andreas Steinmayr