

Off to College with Allergies and Asthma

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For many students, starting college marks the beginning of adulthood and it may be the first time they'll be living independently. This exciting (and sometimes scary) transition poses special challenges for those with allergies and asthma, and it often raises concerns for parents.

A new environment exposes students to different allergy and asthma triggers. The challenges of college life may add additional stress that can aggravate asthma. And, for those with food allergies, dining on campus can seem like a minefield.

These may seem like daunting hurdles to overcome. But with a little planning, teens can successfully transition from high school to college, and at the same time take a more active role in managing their health.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are approximately 17.5 million full- and part-time college students in the United States.
- About 9% of college students report having been diagnosed with asthma, according to the American College Health Association (ACHA).
- Twenty-two percent of college students have allergies, according to the ACHA.
- A recent study of college students with food allergies found that only 3.5% had informed campus dining services of their allergies.

Steps to take

If they aren't already doing so, now is the time for teens begin to take responsibility for managing their conditions. Here are some timely tips for the college-bound:

- When you arrive on campus, meet with staff (especially food service personnel and residence hall advisors) to develop a plan to control your allergies and asthma.
- Don't take chances. Know what triggers your allergic disease and stay away from these allergens. Be aware of signs that you need to seek medical attention.
- Keep prescriptions filled and up-to-date. Always have your medications on hand, including your autoinjectable epinephrine and quick-relief inhaler.
- Consider talking to your friends and roommates about your allergies and asthma. Letting those close to you know about your health, and the signs of a medical emergency, can help you stay safe.
- If you are going away to college, it is important to find an allergist in the area you can contact if you need medical attention while at school. To locate an allergist near your campus, visit www.aaaai.org/physref.

Taking control of your health and being prepared for emergencies will help you manage your asthma and allergies and give your parents some peace-of-mind.

To the Point

Studies have shown that young people are more likely than others to take risks with their health. For example, one study found that many young people with food allergies have eaten a food even though they know that it contains an allergen.



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