

# Keeping Healthy: What Students Should Know About Bugs, Crabs, and Money

By Julie VEINOT

Perhaps health care is not the first thing students equate with university life.

But in reality, there are many health issues to think about while diving into midterms and essays. To see what is out there, The Cadre headed to UPEI's Health Centre to get the low-down on student health.

The Health Centre is located on the top floor of the new Student Centre. When you walk into the room, it looks much like a doctor's office.

This is where you come when you have medical concerns.

Clinical specialist Maureen MacInnis-Wheatley, who is also part of the School of Nursing, says the Health Centre is there for concerns students would normally take to their family physician. She says people with a variety of ailments come through the doors, which are open to all students. For the most part, though, the centre deals with many women's issues like Pap tests, birth control advice, emergency contraception and so on.

One thing students need is the right sexual health information.

"There's still a lot of misinformation out there," she explains. People may be more concerned about pregnancy than sexual diseases. Students need to use condoms every time they have sex and that does not just include intercourse - STDs can be transmitted

by genital contact or oral sex. She says this is one of the stereotypes out there - that oral sex is a safe alternative to intercourse when it isn't (herpes can be transmitted orally).

Whatever their concern - whether it's for flu shots, sports injuries or prescriptions - students can walk in and make an appointment.

"We're here for students - that's really what drives our services."

As far as keeping healthy, she says, "Eat well, keep hydrated and get lots of rest." It's also good to strike a balance between academic and social activities.

The Women's Centre sits next-door to the Health Centre. Co-ordinator Ruth Freeman ponders what students need to know about health - in particular, about women's health.

Eating disorders is one problem students can face, she says, but it's not necessarily a new problem. "A lot of them developed these disorders before coming to university." And when the freshman 20 hits (the weight gain associated with being a new student) it can cause women with eating disorders to panic and crash diet.

If a student knows of an eating disorder, or knows of someone who is struggling with one, Freeman says they can come for help and information, whether it is at the Health Centre, Women's Centre or Student Services. All the services are connected by a lobby just off the elevators and staircase.

Once the physical issues are covered, it's time to go to Student Services, which has a staff of counsellors ready to help with emotional, stress or career issues. Basically anything a student needs to talk about is fair game. One of the counsellors there, Shirley Hudson, says most students have one major concern.

Finances.

"One of the stressors in their life is trying to make ends meet," she says. When students work 30 hours a week along with their full-time studies,

that's the equivalent of two full-time jobs. An individual can only do so much before collapsing under the weight. Hudson says that though some students must work, it's best to not take on too much at the same time, for it becomes frustrating month after month.

"It's not very fulfilling - that is not a positive place to be."

She recommends improving the situation by talking to someone - whether it is about finances, loneliness or adapting to a new culture.

A warning sign something is bothering you: worrying incessantly. Also, if sleeping and eating patterns change, it can indicate something is wrong. "If you normally sleep well and you find you're not [now] it could be you're adjusting to a new spot." It

could also be a sign of depression, which required attention. Hudson says either Student Services or the Health Centre can offer assistance.

"Check it out. Don't ignore anything."

Hearing someone say you're doing O.K. can be reassuring in itself - that's why she urges students to find someone by coming to Student Services for help.

To keep mental health in tip-top shape, she suggests checking out student organizations and meeting people - staying in isolation is the worst thing to do.

So take the information and stay healthy this year.

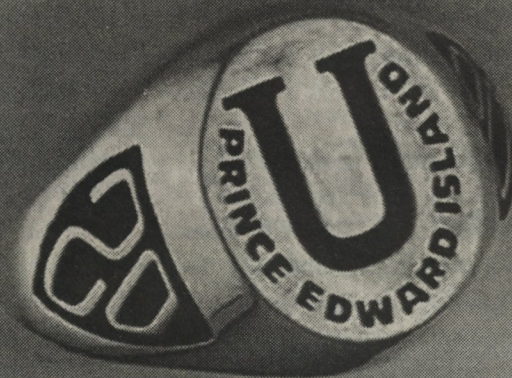
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