

Columbia Health Guide for Parents and Families



Get to Know Columbia Health

Life at Columbia University offers rich opportunities for intellectual, social, and personal growth.

Your student may experience transitions such as:

- Adjusting to life in a new city (or a new country) without their familiar social support network
- Adapting to the University's academic standards, teaching methods, and learning how to prioritize competing demands
- Navigating major life decisions, campus life, and the balance between academics and social life
- Prioritizing personal well-being amidst new independence, such as establishing healthy routines and getting enough rest and sleep

While students find their balance, parents and families play a critical, supportive role. Columbia Health provides a comprehensive network of programs, resources, and services to help your student thrive through every transition.

Want to know more?

There's a section of our website that's just for you:

health.columbia.edu/content/resources-parents-and-families



Columbia Health Services

Columbia Health provides a wide range of support, care, programs, resources, and services.

Our Core Departments:

-  **Medical Services** provides primary and urgent care, nutrition, travel medicine, immunization, sexual health services, reproductive and gynecological services, LGBTQ+ health care, HIV testing, acupuncture, and sports medicine. More at health.columbia.edu/medical
-  **Counseling & Psychological Services** (CPS) provides short-term individual counseling, referrals for longer-term therapy, drop-ins, support spaces, medication consultation, and emergency consultation. More at health.columbia.edu/cps
-  **Alice! Health Promotion** provides students with one-on-one conversations on daily well-being (such as sleep or time management), substance use and recovery, wellness coaching, sexual and reproductive health, gender-affirming care coordination, and [Go Ask Alice!](#), a health Q&A web resource. More at health.columbia.edu/alice
-  **Disability Services** provides academic, classroom, campus, housing, and event accommodations for students with disabilities (including chronic conditions and temporary injuries), and consultations around academic difficulties related to attention or learning issues. More at health.columbia.edu/disability
-  **Sexual Violence Response** provides crisis counseling, intervention, advocacy, connection to resources, online orders of protection, accompaniment for survivors and co-survivors of violence, as well as violence prevention trainings and workshops. More at health.columbia.edu/svr
-  **Student Health Insurance Office** provides guidance on health insurance enrollment, submitting a waiver request, benefits, claims, and other insurance matters. More at health.columbia.edu/insurance

Accessing Care at Columbia Health

How can my student manage their healthcare online?

Remind them to visit the Patient Portal (secure.health.columbia.edu). Your student will use the Portal to submit important immunization requirements prior to registering for classes, complete the pre-arrival health questionnaire (health history form), make appointments, get medical test results, and securely communicate with their providers.

My student is feeling sick or hurt. What should they do?

If they feel sick, even if they only have minor symptoms, your student should call **212-854-7426** during open hours to schedule a [same-day in-person or telehealth appointment](#), or anytime after hours, on weekends, or holidays to connect with an on-call provider for next steps.

My student has never been to the doctor on their own. How can I help?

For many students, this is their first time managing their own healthcare. Before the semester starts, consider helping your student source their medical history documents, including current medications and vaccination records. Encourage your student to share details with their Columbia Health provider to ensure continuous care, with a reminder that their visits are completely confidential.

If they are not on the Columbia Student Health Insurance Plan, review how their insurance plan works and where to access in-network care for any services not covered by Columbia Health. If you want them to use a Health Savings Account (HSA) or Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for prescriptions or external care, ensure they carry the physical card and understand where it is accepted.



My student is having a hard time adjusting to college. What can I do?

The transition can feel overwhelming. Remind your student that all departments at Columbia Health are confidential. Alice! Health Promotion offers specialized programs to support students in navigating various life transitions through drop-in visits, well-being workshops, and wellness coaching. CPS offers drop-in visits, counseling, and support groups. For long-term mental health services, CPS can provide a referral for off-campus treatment. Encourage your student to reach out early, and maintain an open, non-judgmental line of communication. If your student is experiencing an urgent mental health concern, remind them that CPS has a 24/7 helpline: **212-854-2878**.

I want to review my student's medical records. Where can I access their patient portal?

Once a student reaches 18 years of age, they are legally considered an adult under federal and state privacy laws. Columbia Health cannot share medical records, including any diagnoses or treatments they are receiving, with parents or others.

Although we may not be able to share specific details about your student's care, we are available for guidance and to address any concerns you may have.

What is the Health and Related Services Fee?

[The Columbia Health and Related Services Fee \(HRSF\)](#) is a mandatory, non-refundable fee charged to all students (including hybrid, online, and study abroad students). It supports the university's vital health and well-being infrastructure.

Whether your student is on [the Columbia Health Student Insurance Plan \(the Columbia Plan\)](#) or has waived the insurance, **they can still get care from Columbia Health.**

What does it include?

Services depend on enrollment level (Full-Time, Half-Time, or Part-Time). See the full list on the [Health and Related Services Fee page](#) on our website.

What is not covered by the Health and Related Services Fee?

- **Prescriptions and select vaccines**
- **Off-campus urgent care and emergency room visits**
- **Off-campus care**
(specialists, physical therapy, off-campus labs)
- **On-campus labs**
(for students who waive Columbia insurance)
- **Pre-matriculation immunizations**
(complete these before coming to campus to save money)



We have health insurance. Can we opt out of the Columbia Plan?

All full-time and international students are **automatically enrolled** in the Columbia Plan. During the open enrollment period associated with their first semester at the University—and annually each fall thereafter—students with existing health coverage may [submit a waiver request](#) in the Patient Portal. Waiver approval is not guaranteed and requires meeting all [University requirements](#). Visit health.columbia.edu/insurance for more information.

Off-Campus Care Costs

Costs for off-campus care depend on insurance coverage:

- **The Columbia Plan:** Students can use the [Aetna Student Health website](#) or contact the [Student Health Insurance team](#) to learn more about potential costs.
- **Private Insurance:** Contact your health insurance provider directly to confirm out-of-pocket costs and coverage.

Important Campus Contacts & Emergency Numbers

Encourage your student to save these numbers. Columbia Health and university partners provide around-the-clock support.

24/7 Hotlines & Urgent Support

Urgent medical concerns	212-854-7426
Urgent mental health concerns	212-854-2878
Confidential resource at Sexual Violence Response	212-854-HELP (4357)

Public Safety Emergency Lines

In an emergency on campus, your student can call Public Safety first to ensure emergency vehicles are guided directly to the correct campus building. Students can request CUEMS, the 24/7 campus ambulance response, at no cost.

Campus	Main Line	Emergency Line
Morningside Campus	212-854-2797	212-854-5555
Manhattanville Campus	212-853-3301	212-853-3333
Medical Center Campus	212-305-8100	212-305-7979
Lamont Campus	845-359-2900	845-365-8555

Community Emergency Resources

New York City Police Department	911
Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	988
Medical and Psychiatric Emergency Room	Mount Sinai Morningside (1111 Amsterdam Avenue at 113th St)