

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE SICK?

Not every illness or minor discomfort warrants a trip to SHS. Sometimes, the best thing you can do is treat yourself to a little self-care and avoid spreading your germs around campus.

1. Acute Vaginitis

Vaginal inflammation that results in irregular discharge, itching, and pain during sex or urination is called vaginitis. Bacterial vaginosis, yeast infections and the sexually transmitted trichomoniasis are all forms of vaginitis.

What to Do

Generally, it's a good idea to see a doctor in most cases of down-there discomfort, especially if you're sexually active or experiencing fever, chills, or pelvic pain. If you've had a yeast infection in the past and are confident in your ability to self-diagnose, you can try treating it with an over-the-counter medication like Monistat (or a generic—they're just as effective as prescription medications). If your symptoms persist after treatment, make an appointment online or send a message to the nurse.

If the discomfort and discharge aren't enough to put your sex life on hold for a few days, keep in mind that the inflammation caused by trichomoniasis and bacterial vaginosis could put you at greater risk of getting an STI

2. Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Did you know that UTIs are among the most common infections in people? While older adults are particularly prone to contracting a UTI, sexually active adults (especially people with vaginas) are at risk, too.

UTIs are caused by bacteria that has entered the opening of the bladder. These bacteria could come from anywhere, especially your anus. Keep your urinary tract happier by peeing before and after sex, staying well hydrated, and generally not putting anything like powders or sprays near your genital area.

What to Do

If you're experiencing painful and frequent urination, a low fever, cloudy or bloody urine, and/or lower abdominal cramping, call SHS. Most UTIs affect the bladder, but the infection could spread to your kidneys, causing symptoms like **high fever, night sweats, nausea, and confusion or disorientation**. A doctor can determine if the infection is a bladder infection, kidney infection, or a symptom of something else, like an STI. Most UTIs are successfully treated with antibiotics.

3. Abdominal Pain and Digestive Issues

Nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, gas, bloating, heartburn...there is no shortage of gastrointestinal issues you might experience.

What to Do

Call SHS if you are experiencing discomfort or pain that lasts more than a few days. If you are in severe pain, have persistent **nausea and/or vomiting, tenderness or swelling in your abdomen, or your skin appears yellow**, get help immediately.

Take care of your GI tract by eating fiber-rich foods (like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables) and staying hydrated. Eating smaller meals and slowing down while you eat can help prevent indigestion and heartburn. Light exercise can ease constipation and bloating.

4. Low Back Pain

Back pain is most often caused by a strain or a sprain from improper lifting, bad posture, or lack of exercise. Most back pain will go away on its own, but more serious injuries like vertebral fractures or ruptured disks require a doctor's care.

What to Do

Resting in bed can help you feel more comfortable but be advised that inactivity for more than a day can do more harm than good. Over-the-counter pain relievers as well as hot or cold compresses may help ease the pain.

Call SHS if your back pain is **accompanied by weakness, numbness, or tingling that spreads down one or both legs. Unintended weight loss and swelling or redness on your back** could also be signs of a more serious issue. **Get emergency medical help if your back pain comes along with new bowel/bladder control issues.**

5. Headaches

A headache can be any type of pain in your head—one side or both, throbbing or vise-like, sharp or dull. A headache can happen suddenly or gradually, and last for a few minutes or a few days. Headaches can be caused by dehydration, alcohol, caffeine withdrawal, processed foods, stress, lack of sleep... Are you surprised that a lot of college students suffer from headaches?

A headache can also be a sign of a more serious condition, like a concussion, meningitis, an aneurysm, or encephalitis.

What to Do

Seek emergency medical help if you are **experiencing confusion, fainting, high fever, vomiting (unless you know it's just your hangover), or having trouble doing things like walking, speaking, or understanding speech.** If your headaches are occurring more frequently or severely than usual, don't improve with the help of over-the-counter medicines, or are getting in the way of your participation in daily activities, you should consult with a medical provider.

6. Strep Throat

Wondering if your sore throat might be strep? Only a throat swab from a doctor can tell you if you've been infected with Streptococcus bacteria. Call SHS if your sore throat is accompanied by **fever, red and swollen tonsils (maybe with some white patches or streaks), red spots on the roof of your mouth, and/or swollen lymph nodes in the front of your neck.** If you do indeed have strep, a round of antibiotics can help you recover more quickly, as well as prevent complications like a rheumatic fever.

If your voice is hoarse or raspy and you have a runny nose or cough, it's more likely that you have a virus and not strep—and antibiotics won't help you.

What to Do

Whether it's strep throat or a virus, **limit your contact with others, step up your hand washing, and disinfect high-touch surfaces until your illness subsides.**

7. Bronchitis (Chest Cold)

Coughing caused by swollen airways in the lungs and increased mucus production is called bronchitis, or a chest cold. You may feel a soreness in your chest and throat, mild head and body aches, and fatigue. A low fever is common, too.

What to Do

Acute bronchitis will usually go away on its own, antibiotics are generally not needed. Contact SHS if your fever goes above 37.5 degrees, you're having trouble breathing, your mucus is thick or bloody, or your symptoms last more than three weeks.

A humidifier or cool mist vaporizer may help soothe your cough. Steamy showers and non-medicated cough drops can offer relief as well.

8. Upper Respiratory Infection (Common Cold)

Sore throat, runny nose, coughing, and sneezing—most adults have had a pesky cold at some point in their life.

What to Do

While there is no cure for the common cold, over-the-counter medicines can help ease symptoms. Get lots of rest and drink plenty of fluids. Contact SHS if you have a fever over 100.4 degrees or if your symptoms last more than 10 days.

Avoid spreading your cold by staying home and avoiding close contact with others. (That means no kissing, hugging, or even shaking hands.) Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your upper shirt sleeve, completely covering your nose and mouth. Wash your hands constantly and disinfect surfaces that you touch often.

9. The Flu

The flu tends to come on more suddenly than a common cold. Symptoms include fever (100.4 degrees or above), headache, achy muscles, cold sweat, dry cough, fatigue, nasal congestion, and sore throat.

What To Do

If you get the flu, it's important to take good care of yourself and avoid spreading the disease to others. As soon as you start to feel flu-like symptoms, call SHS or send a message through Patient Connect to ask for advice. Unless you are experiencing difficulty breathing, chest or abdominal pain, dizziness or persistent vomiting, you may not even need to see a doctor.

Stay in bed! Drink plenty of fluids and take an over-the-counter fever reducer like Tylenol or Advil (but avoid aspirin, as it can cause a serious brain disease in flu sufferers). Ask a friend to be your "flu buddy" and pick up assignments, food, tissues, and other supplies—they can get a free mask from SHS to help them make safe deliveries.

- Wear a mask to go to the bathroom in your dorm or any other time you are in public.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often.
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces (like keyboards, door knobs, and your phone) with anti-bacterial wipes.

If you live off campus or in graduate housing, stay home until any fever you may have has subsided for a minimum of 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications). For most flu sufferers, this will take about four days. If your family home is close to campus, consider spending your recovery time at home.

NB : Of course this will need us revisit our sick note agreement to make it work but I believe in the circumstances we are facing, we need to be open minded about a lot of things to try and curb infections.

REFERRAL SERVICES

Primary Health Care strives to offer timely urgent care right here on campus. We also work with a number of local health care providers for more comprehensive or specialized services.

Dental Care

University of Pretoria does not have qualified dentists on campus but to keep your smile in shape during your time at UP you may be referred to the Dental Clinic in Prinshof Campus or if you are on a Medical Aid Scheme, you may use the dentist of your choice or the ones next to the university as you are responsible for any charges that may occur.

Vision Care

Need new eyeglasses or contacts or you have problem with your vision? If you are enrolled in UP, there is an Optometrist who comes in every Wednesday at Hatfield Campus. The consultation is free and depending on the outcome of the consultation there may be a charge for things like glasses and contact lenses.

Radiology

X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs

SHS does not offer any Radiological Services but they refer out to Tshwane District Hospital and Private Hospitals. There is also a radiology site at the Hatmed medical facilities next to Hatfield campus that offer a student rate to enrolled students.

Laboratory Tests

Blood Work & More

SHS do not have an on-site lab for some basic testing, we may need to send your specimen to an outside lab for more advanced processing. Lancet is doing most laboratory testing for registered student of University of Pretoria at a discount.

Allergy Shots

SHS does not provide allergy shots, but we can point you toward a local practice that does.

NB There should be a list of facilities that offer such services.

Travel Medicine

Going abroad? You may need certain vaccines or preventative care to stay healthy, check for the most up-to-date guidelines. If you need travel health services, make an appointment at a local travel clinic, there is one at the Hatmed centre.

If you are doing international research or another program that will involve contact with patients and/or blood-borne pathogens, please review the guidelines.

NB The health care professionals need to have updated guidelines to be able to advise better.