



# Health & Wellness Guide

**Athens Technical College**

Office of Student Activities  
Office of Student Support Services

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## Introduction

Athens Technical College has produced this Health & Wellness Guide in order to support healthy living for all members of the campus community. A lifestyle built around the wellness concept can enhance complete well-being and increase the power individuals have to accomplish educational and life goals. Knowing about healthy living and the risks associated with non-healthy activities can help individuals to make informed decisions about their lives. When support is needed, community resources exist to assist individuals during a time of need. Contact information for many resources is available from the Student Support Services Director on the Athens Campus, or online through Community Connection of Northeast Georgia at [www.communityconnection211.org](http://www.communityconnection211.org)

Information for this guide has been put together from the following sources:

Advocates for Youth ([www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org))

AIDS Athens ([www.aidsathens.org](http://www.aidsathens.org))

Center for Disease Control & Prevention ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

The National Institute of Health ([www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov))

The Office of the Surgeon General ([www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov))

The President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition ([www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov))

UGA Health Center ([www.uhs.uga.edu](http://www.uhs.uga.edu))

Requests for additional information should be directed to the Office of Student Activities or the Office of Student Support Services.

## Life Skills

### Stress

Stress is a general descriptor for our physical and emotional responses to changes or demands in our lives. The changes do not have to be negative to be stressful. Starting a new job can be just as stressful as being fired. Under stress your heart beats faster, you breathe faster, your blood pressure goes up, and other metabolic changes occur. Psychologically you may feel rushed, nervous, or irritable; have difficulty concentrating; feel fatigued; and feel time pressured. Stress can also produce various appetite changes. Each of us has a unique stress profile. What is stressful for you may not be stressful for someone else.

The same can be said for stress relievers; what works for you may not work for someone else. Good basic nutrition, coupled with regular exercise, regular rest and regular involvement in a leisure activity, help us better cope with stress. Finding individuals in whom you can confide and who offer you support is also important in dealing with stress. Instruction in time management, stress management, and relaxation techniques may be appropriate for some individuals.

### Fitness

Regular exercise and physical activity play key roles in helping us achieve satisfaction in work and school, relationships, recreation, and health. Conversely, lack of exercise has been associated with obesity, back problems, fatigue, and perhaps most important, a weakened cardiovascular system which may be more susceptible to heart disease.

There are many benefits to regular exercise:

1. You'll feel better physically. Your heart will be stronger, heart and lungs will work more efficiently and you will have more energy.
2. You'll feel better emotionally. People who exercise regularly report a positive sense of well-being. Exercise is a stress reducer and there is evidence that exercise helps relieve depression and insomnia.
3. You'll look better. Muscle tone will increase and a percentage of body fat will decrease. In addition to burning calories, exercise aids in decreasing your appetite.

A good fitness program should address three important areas: endurance, muscle strength, and flexibility. An exercise program is only beneficial if it is consistent and regular. When choosing a program, make a plan that includes activities that you enjoy. Make sure that the plan is well-rounded; start slowly and increase the activities gradually. The President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition has an extensive [website](#) with additional tips and resources.

### Nutrition

Proper diet is the ultimate source of good health. Throughout life, it is nutrition gained through eating that builds the body up and gives it strength to repair itself. Once the diet is consumed, the body is very good at picking the choosing just the right nutrients for the different areas and systems to ensure proper functions. If the body lacks some essential ingredient, the body has no way to get it.

To ensure a proper diet, nutritionists say to eat a variety of foods. The building blocks which provide the body's needs are water, vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, and fats. Most guides on this subject suggest you eat foods from these groups daily:

1. Dairy Group – milk, cheese, or milk-source foods;
2. Meat Group – fish, meat, and poultry; dried beans, nuts, and peanut butter are alternatives;
3. Vegetable and Fruit Group – dark garden vegetables or deep yellow fruits, citrus fruit and tomatoes;
4. Bread and Cereal Group – enriched or whole grain.

These four groups are the foundation of a balanced diet. The United States Department of Agriculture has noted that balancing foods from each of these areas with the proper moderation and portion control is key to a healthy lifestyle. More information on their suggestions can be found on their [website](#).

## **Weight Reduction**

Much hype has been made about the fact that many Americans are overweight and that many college students gain weight during their college career. Being overweight carries with it a number of health concerns, both long-term and short-term. These include: heart disease, pain, diabetes, sleep apnea, and others. The National Institute of Health provides a Body Mass Index calculator that can be used to determine if someone is overweight. The calculator can be accessed on their website [here](#).

There is much that can be done to combat being overweight. Individuals who are, should work to create a weight reduction plan that works for them. This can be accomplished individually, through group programs, or with the collaboration of a physician or fitness trainer. Some of the techniques for weight reduction include:

1. Eat small portioned, regular, balanced meals.
2. Reduce the intake of soft drinks and other sugar laden beverages such as alcohol.
3. Engage in a physical fitness exercise plan (walking, jogging, swimming, etc.) or athletic exercise (tennis, softball, crew, etc.).
4. Avoid fast food and unhealthy snacks.
5. Find a support system to help you stay on track.
6. Do not expect weight loss to happen overnight. Be patient.

## **Smoking**

Smoking is a matter of personal choice. However, the link between smoking and lung cancer seems clear. If you are going to smoke, you should know what is happening to your body.

1. Each time you inhale tobacco smoke you kill several hundred lung cells.
2. You send carbon monoxide into the blood where it competes with oxygen for hemoglobin.
3. You paralyze the bronchial cilia and make it hard for them to keep bacteria from the lungs.
4. You speed up your heart rate.
5. You dull your brain with carbon monoxide, thereby slowing your reaction time and visual acuity.
6. Nicotine hits the central nervous system and stimulates it to release hormones. A feel of depression and fatigue follows the nicotine "rush."
7. Other components of cigarette smoke cause the arteries to contract, causing a decrease in blood supply to the fingers and toes and a drop in skin temperature.

For information on smoking cessation, visit the Surgeon General's [website](#).

## **Drug Use & Abuse**

Many people use and abuse drugs; sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. The following information is about drugs that are consumed knowingly and in our day-to-day life. If you determine that you have a drug dependency problem or just want more information, please contact the Office of Student Support Services. The National Institute of Health operates the National Institute on Drug Abuse and their [website](#) has an amazing amount of information on this topic.

### **Aspirin / Ibuprofen**

These are some of the most commonly abused drugs. They are, also, some of the most useful medicines. Taking these medications to assist with pain management, reduce fever, or as an anti-inflammatory, in moderation is fine. However, habitual use can result in negative effects and dependency.

### **Caffeine**

The users of soft drinks, coffee, tea, and chocolate often do not think that they are taking drugs, but all of these items contain caffeine – a drug which is sometimes prescribed medically. Those who overuse caffeine are often truly addicted.

### **Tobacco**

Tobacco is addictive due to its containing nicotine. Nicotine decreases blood flow to vital organs which contributes to disease in these organs. Smoking is the number one voluntary health risk. Tobacco abuse increases the risk of chronic bronchitis, emphysema, upper respiratory and lung infections, and coronary artery and cardiovascular disease. It is the leading risk factor for cancer of the larynx, lung, mouth, throat, esophagus, kidney, pancreas, and bladder. Smokeless tobacco is just as dangerous and addicting as smoking. While the greatest risk of tobacco use is oral cancer, it can also cause dental problems, including: tooth decay, bad breath, discolored teeth, and gum disease.

### **Alcohol**

Although alcohol is legal, it is a potentially lethal drug and can be addictive. Drinking is so much a part of American culture that we can take it for granted. We drink at home, at parties, in bars, in restaurants, and at athletic events. We drink to relax, to break the ice, to celebrate, to show off, and to forget. In turn, we often neglect to recognize that we have a choice in whether or not we consume alcohol. The choice is ours alone and should be made responsibly.

Alcohol is potent – it affects the brain powerfully and quickly. Alcohol kills. It is a major factor in motor vehicle accidents, drownings, and violent crimes. Long-term excessive abuse of alcohol increases the risks of heart disease, liver disease, cancer, brain

damage, mental disorders, loss of sexual functions, and blood disorders. Alcohol abuse during pregnancy can cause birth defects and other fetal abnormalities.

Some individuals can be categorized as problem drinkers and may need to seek support in order to drink more responsibly. Warning signs of this are below:

1. Family, social, job, or financial difficulties due to drinking.
2. Loss of ability to control drinking.
3. "Blackouts," or forgetting what happened while drinking.
4. Distressing reactions if drinking is stopped.
5. A need to drink increasingly more to get desired effect.
6. Changes in behavior or personality when drinking.
7. Getting drunk frequently – more than four times a year.
8. Injuring oneself or someone else while intoxicated.
9. Breaking the law while intoxicated.
10. Starting the day with a drink.

Consuming alcohol in moderation is an example of responsible drinking. Other attributes of a responsible drinker are:

1. Drinks while relaxing, not to relax.
2. Eats before and during drinking.
3. Has two or fewer drinks daily.
4. Abstains periodically.
5. Doesn't rush, or rush others when drinking.
6. Feels comfortable alternating alcoholic with non-alcoholic drinks.
7. Follows legal sanctions pertaining to drinking.
8. Recognizes alcohol is a potent drug.
9. Respects the right of others to drink or not to drink.

## **Marijuana**

Marijuana is a dangerous and illegal drug. It damages the lungs in the same way as cigarette smoke, causes chest pain because of increased heart rate, reduces short-term memory, and affects the reproductive system of males and females. Its chronic use is associated with "amotivational syndrome" – loss of motivation and interest in school, work, friends, etc. Marijuana also interferes with coordination, reactions and judgment. Marijuana is psychologically addictive.

## **Stimulants**

The amphetamines (bennies, dexies, speed), methphetamines (ice, crystal), and cocaine (coke, blow, flake, snow, crack, rock) fall into this class of drug. These drugs are not harmless. They raise blood pressure and respirations. Sudden death due to cardiac arrhythmias or stroke can occur at anytime, even with the first use. Users of stimulants build up tolerance so that more and more of the drug is needed to get the same effect. These drugs can be psychologically and physically addictive.

## **Narcotics**

This class of drugs includes opium, morphine, codeine, and heroin. These drugs are addictive. They are used medically to alleviate pain; but even in this case, these drugs must be used cautiously because of the tendency to produce addiction.

## **Sedatives**

Barbituates like phenobarbital are the main drugs in the sedative class. As with virtually all classes of drugs, these have definite medical value. They are, however, physically addictive. Sudden withdrawal from phenobarbital can cause severe problems including convulsions, just as sudden withdrawal can produce delirium tremens and convulsions in an alcoholic.

## **Psychedelic Drugs**

The major psychedelics are Mescaline, Psilocybin, and LSD. These drugs increase pulse, heart rate, blood pressure, and temperature. They also cause chills, nausea, irregular breathing, confusion, and hallucinations. Frequent users can have flashbacks without taking additional drugs. There is also evidence that LSD can cause permanent genetic damage. Psychedelic drugs are very unpredictable. One "trip" may be good and another may be disastrous. There is a great danger of bodily injury to self and others associated with psychedelic drug use.

### ***Assistance***

If you feel that you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol, contact the Office of Student Support Services or your physician/counselor for guidance. Assistance is available. If you know someone who may have a drug or alcohol problem, do not be afraid to talk with them about it. Show your concern and offer some support while avoiding criticizing. Discuss the issue when neither of you are drinking or using drugs. Be prepared to offer suggestions for support services.

## Sexual Health

According to the World Health Organization, “Sexual health is a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.” This section will cover topics such as healthy relationships, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and safe sex practices. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has an extensive [website](#) with more information than can be provided here.

### Healthy Relationships

Healthy sexual relationships are consensual, communicative, free of coercion, safe, supportive, and respectful. Adults choosing to engage in romantic and/or sexual relationships should do so carefully and honestly. Before engaging in such relationships, asking the following questions can help you determine the appropriateness of your decision:

1. Am I following my personal beliefs and values?
2. Do we both want the same thing (casual sex, relationship, etc.)?
3. How will I feel about this in the morning, in a week, in a year?
4. Am I letting alcohol, drug use, self-esteem, or peer pressure affect my decision?
5. Have my partner and I talked about the possible consequences, such as disease/infection or pregnancy?
6. Do I know how to protect myself from disease/infection and do I have the materials necessary to do so?
7. Is this consensual sex?

Advocates for Youth ([www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)) offer the following distinction between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

<b>Being in a HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP means...</b>	<b>If you are in an UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP...</b>
Loving and taking care of yourself, before and while in a relationship.	You care for and focus on another person only and neglect yourself or you focus only on yourself and neglect the other person.
Respecting individuality, embracing differences, and allowing each person to "be themselves."	You feel pressure to change to meet the other person's standards, you are afraid to disagree, or your ideas are criticized. Or, you pressure the other person to meet your standards and criticize his/her ideas.
Doing things with friends and family and having activities independent of each other.	One of you has to justify what you do, where you go, and who you see.

Discussing things, allowing for differences of opinion, and compromising equally.	One of you makes all the decisions and controls everything without listening to the other's input.
Expressing and listening to each other's feelings, needs, and desires.	One of you feels unheard and is unable to communicate what you want.
Trusting and being honest with yourself and each other.	You lie to each other and find yourself making excuses for the other person or to them.
Respecting each other's need for privacy.	You don't have any personal space and have to share everything with the other person.
Sharing sexual histories and sexual health status with a partner.	Your partner keeps his/her sexual history a secret or hides a sexually transmitted infection from you or you do not disclose your history to your partner.
Practicing safer sex methods.	You feel scared of asking your partner to use protection or s/he has refused your requests for safer sex. Or, you refuse to use safer sex methods after your partner has requested or you make your partner feel scared.
Respecting sexual boundaries and being able to say no to sex.	Your partner has forced you to have sex or you have had sex when you don't really want to. Or, you have forced or coerced your partner to have sex.
Resolving conflicts in a rational peaceful, and mutually agreed upon way.	One of you yells and hits, shoves or throws things at the other in an argument.
There is room for positive growth and you learn more about each other as you develop and mature.	You feel stifled, trapped, and stagnant. You are unable to escape the pressures of the relationship.

If you feel that you are in a relationship that is unhealthy, there are many ways to find support and assistance. You can start by visiting the Office of Student Support Services which can provide a safe place for you to talk about your concerns and then help you find the appropriate support mechanism to either work on your relationship or, if necessary, develop a safe exit strategy.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are ones that are transmitted through sexual contact with an infected person. Individuals can be infected after only one sexual experience and carriers of STIs should not be thought of as “bad” or “dirty.”

There is an important distinction between viral and bacterial STIs. Bacterial STIs (chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea) can be treated with antibiotics if diagnosed early enough. The symptoms of viral infections (herpes, genital warts, HIV, hepatitis B) can be treated, but there is no known cure for viral STIs.

*Chlamydia* - Chlamydia is the nation's most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted infection. Chlamydia is spread by direct sexual contact. People usually do not realize they have the disease because symptoms are very mild or do not appear at all. As a result, they may not seek treatment until serious complications occur. When symptoms are present, women may suffer itching and burning in the genital area, vaginal discharge, dull abdominal pain and bleeding between menstrual periods. Men may experience painful urination and watery discharge from the penis. Symptoms may appear several days to several weeks after exposure.

*Genital Herpes* - Genital herpes is a contagious viral infection transmitted through sexual contact. It is the most common cause of genital ulcers. Genital herpes occurs worldwide, and is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections in the United States. The symptoms of genital herpes may be either acute or recurrent. Acute (initial) symptoms may appear days after exposure to the virus, but may be delayed for weeks or months. The first symptom is a burning, tingling sensation where a sore is forming. A blister quickly develops and will rupture within 24-48 hours. An ulcer or open sore then forms at the site of the blister. The sore will gradually disappear in about two weeks, but may be painful when present. Herpes sores may be single, or may be multiple, covering the entire genital region. Recurrent herpes is possible, because even though the acute sore will disappear, the virus remains in the body. It may be reactivated by many circumstances (stress, fever, friction, heat, etc.) and sores will reappear at the initial site. Not every person will experience recurrent herpes. When it is recurrent, sores usually have a shorter course than in the initial stage. Some individuals who have the herpes virus may not realize it. There may be no symptoms or very mild symptoms, so the person is not aware of the infection. American Social Health Association estimates that as many as 90% of individuals who have herpes may not be aware that they have the virus.

*Gonorrhea* - Caused by the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, gonorrhea seems to be transmitted almost exclusively through sexual contact. Sexual activity, vaginal, oral, or anal sex, with an infected partner is riskier for women than for men. While symptoms tend to appear quite quickly and are unpleasant for men, it is also possible for the infection to be mild and relatively asymptomatic. In men, within 2 weeks after infection, burning and itching sensations develop in the urethra, especially during urination. There is also a thick, pus like discharge from the urethra, often spotting underwear. Although up to 80% of women do not detect gonorrhea in its earlier stages, its most typical early symptom is a green or yellow discharge from the cervical area, where the bacteria tend to strike first. There may then be some vaginal irritation or irregularities in menstruation. If gonorrhea is not treated in its early stages, the initial symptoms usually disappear, however, the bacteria often move to other organs, causing more serious infections and complications. In men, it may affect the bladder, prostate, kidneys, or epididymis of the testes. Left untreated in either sex, the disease can cause sterility. In women, the infection often moves into the reproductive organs such as the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries, and may eventually result in pelvic inflammatory disease.

*Hepatitis* - Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver caused by any one of several viruses. It strikes at least one million people in the United States each year. This website gives an overview of its various forms, with a special focus on hepatitis B. Many people with hepatitis B don't have symptoms. Symptoms, if they occur, appear from one to six months after exposure to the virus. These symptoms include fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, joint pain, muscle aches, and abdominal pain. After a few weeks, some infected people have jaundice, a yellowing of the skin and eyes. Darkened urine is also possible.

*HPV* - Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus that affects the skin in the genital area, as well as a female's cervix. Depending on the type of HPV, symptoms can be in the form of wart-like growths or abnormal cell changes. HPV is considered the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the US. There are many different types of genital HPV; some cause genital warts and some cause abnormal cell changes in a woman's cervix.

*Syphilis* - Syphilis is caused by a spirochete called *Treponema pallidum*. Syphilis can progress through four major stages, beginning 2 weeks to a month after infection. The first stage, or primary syphilis, is nearly always characterized by the appearance of a painless sore wherever the spirochete entered the body. The sore, called a chancre, begins as a reddish bump that develops into a pimple. It then opens and ulcerates, often oozing pus until a scab develops. The chancre is sometimes surrounded by a pink border. This sore is infested with the *treponema* organism, and the individual is highly infectious at this stage. Usually the chancre appears on the genitals, although it can appear on the mouth, anal area, and on fingers or breasts. In women it frequently occurs on the inner vaginal wall or cervix and sometimes in the rectum. Since it is relatively painless, it may not be noticed. Within 4 to 6 weeks, the chancre heals even without treatment and there may be no further symptoms for up to 6 months.

Some STIs are curable and others are not, however, all are treatable. For your safety and the safety of those with whom you choose to have a sexual relationship, it is important for you to know whether you have an STI. If you do, seek treatment and be responsible by sharing your status with your sexual partners, taking necessary precautions to keep them from getting infected. Testing is available through your primary care physician and through many local clinics. You can locate a clinic that suits your needs and economic conditions by searching the web or visiting the Office of Student Support Services, where a staff person will be happy to make a referral.

## **HIV/AIDS**

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infects people by entering the bloodstream after direct contact with semen, vaginal fluids, or blood from an infected person. Virtually all HIV-infected persons will eventually develop AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), although the time from HIV infection to AIDS can range from 2 to 15 years. People with AIDS usually die from serious infections because the virus permanently invades special blood cells which work to fight off infections and rid the body of cancerous cells. There is no cure at present, but there are medications to prolong the lives of infected

people. A person infected with HIV can feel and appear well for up to 10-15 years but still be able to spread the virus to others during this time. Many people are infected but do not know it. Others may suspect they carry the virus but are afraid to be tested. Others may not be honest about their HIV infection, their sexual/drug history or pretend that they have been tested when they have not.

Certain behaviors are more risky than others when it comes to HIV infection. The following behaviors can put you in high risk of being infected with HIV.

1. Unprotected (without a condom) anal intercourse
2. Unprotected vaginal intercourse
3. Sharing needles for any reason (injecting any drug, including steroids)
4. Unprotected sexual contact with multiple partners
5. Unprotected sexual contact with someone whose sexual history is unknown.

There are many myths about contracting HIV. It is important to know that you cannot contract HIV from the following:

1. Hugging/touching a person with HIV
2. Using any equipment, touching any surface or using a toilet after a person who is HIV positive
3. A mosquito bite.

It is often very easy to disregard conversations about HIV/AIDS, thinking that we are somehow immune to this virus. The following are statistics regarding HIV/AIDS in the state of Georgia.

1. Georgia ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the US in cases of AIDS.
2. 45 percent of the women with AIDS in Georgia become infected through sex with infected men.
3. AIDS is the leading cause of death for African American men and women ages 20-44 in Georgia.
4. AIDS is spreading as rapidly in rural areas and small cities in Georgia as it is in Atlanta.
5. Young adults age 20 to 29 have accounted for 20 percent of all AIDS cases reported in Georgia from 1981 through June 2003.

HIV/AIDS testing is available through several local service providers as well as your primary care physician. Testing can be very quick (20 minutes) and anonymous. Given that it can take up to 10 years after infection to show symptoms and that during such years, a positive person can infect others, it is very important for sexually active persons to get tested regularly.

Living with HIV/AIDS can be a difficult situation. There are medications that can assist positive individuals with living full lives. They are, however, very expensive (up to \$3000.00 per month). People living with HIV/AIDS often need emotional support and assistance in dealing with the negative stigma that comes with a positive status.

For assistance with testing and other services related to HIV/AIDS you can contact the largest local service provider in NE Georgia, [AIDS Athens](#). Other assistance can be accessed by contacting the Office of Student Support Services.

### **Safe Sex Practices**

If you choose to be sexually active, do so responsibly. Be tested regularly for STIs and share your status with your partner(s). Use condoms and/or other barriers (dental dams, etc.) when engaged in sexual activity, including oral sex. Always have a conversation with your partner(s) about their infection status before any sexual activity is initiated.