Medical Center at Maynooth
A student medical center is available free of charge to students on campus and normal hours of operation are 10am-12 noon and 2pm–5pm Monday to Friday. A walk-in service is available between 9.30am and 10.30am Monday to Friday during term time. However, students are advised to check notices for any change in hours. There is a doctor and two nurses present on a daily basis and students with existing medical conditions should indicate these at the time of application for an appointment. The contact number for the Medical Centre is +353 1 708 3878.

The Medical Center on campus is supplemented by area doctors and hospitals for more serious needs and emergency situations. When you get your HTH insurance card, you will have resources available to locate the nearest health care facilities. On-site staff at Maynooth will also have full information on the nearest doctors’ offices and hospitals.

Before you leave for Maynooth, you should carefully read the information below. It will orient you a bit on general physical and mental health maintenance.

Medical and dental check-ups
Medical and dental check-ups prior to your departure are highly recommended. Review your travel plans with a physician who knows your personal medical history.

Vaccinations
No vaccinations are required to enter Ireland. Nevertheless, if you plan to travel to other countries independently, consult the website for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/travel) to determine which vaccinations are recommended for the countries to which you will be traveling and other health advice. Most vaccinations are available at little or no cost from your county Health Department.

Jet Lag
As you know, each of us has peak periods during the day and times when we are a little less than peak. This cycle is called the circadian rhythm and the disruption of this rhythm results in jet lag. Some of the changes experienced from jet lag are that you feel energetic at 4 p.m. rather than at 9 a.m., you need to use the bathroom more in the middle of the night, and you are hungry at times other than the usual breakfast, lunch and dinner hours. Of course, not everyone has the same experience with jet lag and length of recovery differs from one to several days. There are many different suggestions for dealing with jet lag, but here are a few things to remember:

- Be patient with yourself. After traveling for long periods of time, it is not uncommon to feel exhausted, easily confused, frustrated, etc.
- Try to get outside and walk or exercise your first day abroad.
- Try to get on the local sleep schedule as quickly as possible.

There are many different recommendations for eating before and during the flight. Do a little research and decide what is best for you. None are a magic pill; you will still have some adjusting to do. However, there are a few things all plans agree on:

- Avoid alcohol, sleeping pills and tranquilizers before and during the flight as they only increase fatigue without making you sleep better.
- Avoid smoking; the combination of carbon monoxide in your blood and altitude also increases feelings of fatigue.
- Drink lots of water.

**Sexual Health**
Traveling abroad is an educational and exciting time, but for those who are sexually active, an STD or unplanned child is not a souvenir you want to bring home. Read over these few tips before traveling abroad:

- Using a condom correctly and consistently during vaginal, anal, and male oral sex can greatly reduce a person’s risk of unwanted pregnancy and STD’s.
- If you are sexually active with men, bring your own stock of condoms along to ensure you have them on hand and that they are a brand you trust.
- Women taking contraceptive pills or using a prescription-type birth control should bring a supply from home in order to avoid locating a local doctor to fill a prescription abroad.
- Keep in mind that many STD’s are asymptomatic, meaning there aren’t any visible symptoms. Just because things “appear” normal, doesn’t always mean that they are. You can still acquire an STD, even if your partner doesn’t have symptoms.
- To prevent infections such as HIV and Hepatitis B, avoid receiving tattoos, body piercings, or injections of any kind.
- STD’s are transmittable through oral-genital contact. Make sure to use a condom for male oral sex, and a dental dam for anal oral sex and female oral sex.
- Avoid any sexual activity with prostitutes, individuals who have multiple sexual partners, and intravenous drug users.

Make sure to protect yourself regardless of what your partner says or does, and don't be afraid to call a halt to any activity that you feel puts you at risk. Have fun abroad, but be smart, be safe, and don't compromise your health for the sake of one night - or hour!

**Helpful Websites for More Information:**

- [www.uncw.edu/healthpromo](http://www.uncw.edu/healthpromo)
  
  Get your questions answered confidentially. Click “Ask the Health Educator”
- [www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/)
- [www.cdc.gov/Features/StudyAbroad/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/StudyAbroad/)
- [www.cdc.gov/travel/content/study-abroad.aspx](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/study-abroad.aspx)

**Traveler’s Diarrhea**
Traveler’s diarrhea is caused by a bacterial infection 90 percent of the time. The remaining 10% is due to viruses or protozoans (Giardia, Amebiasis, etc.). Somewhere between 20-50 percent of persons traveling to a foreign country will develop diarrhea during or shortly after their trip. The risk is highest when traveling to developing countries of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Traveler’s diarrhea is usually caused by a toxin-producing bacteria that is acquired by ingesting contaminated food or water. Risky items might include:

- Tap water, including ice cubes.
- Raw vegetables, raw meat and raw seafood.
- Food that has been sitting out, such as a buffet.
- Unpasteurized milk or other dairy products.
- Fruits that cannot be peeled by the consumer.

To prevent traveler’s diarrhea, you should avoid the high risk items listed above and avoid buying food/beverages from street vendors.

**Treatment of Traveler’s Diarrhea**

There are a number of measures that can be used to reduce the severity and the duration of the episode and avoid dehydration.

- Drink bottled fruit juices or caffeine-free soft drinks.
- Eat salted crackers (you need salt and water).
- Powdered oral rehydration fluid mixed with bottled water is ideal.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeinated beverages.
- Avoid dairy products, which may make the diarrhea worse.
- If diarrhea is severe, only drink clear liquids.

Additionally, products such as Pepto-Bismol or Imodium may shorten the duration of the episode. Kaopectate will probably have no effect. Always follow the manufacturer’s directions and warnings when using these products. If your symptoms do not respond to this course of treatment, you may need treatment with an antibiotic. We suggest you seek medical advice on an appropriate antibiotic.

**Your Mental Health**


Consider your own mental health issues when preparing for your program, and make all your necessary health information available to your program’s administrators in the U.S. and abroad so they can assist you with any special needs, or advise you on the risks you might face. You completed UNCW’s Health Information and Emergency Treatment Form as part of your online application, but consider if any details have changed or you have new health information to share. You can easily update your online information. Study abroad may include both physical and mental challenges for students, so make sure you establish a support network of program administrators, family and friends who can help you.

Traveling or studying overseas is not a cure for health conditions such as depression or attention deficit disorder. Sometimes going abroad may in fact amplify a condition. A student may not have adequate access to their prescription medication or mental health facilities. Medication can be different or may not be available in Ireland. If you have concern, NUIM staff can put you in contact with their Medical Centre. Some prescriptions may not be available so it is a good idea to find out, before you leave, if your prescriptions are available in Ireland. In addition, culture shock, language barriers, and homesickness can deepen isolation or depression.

**Workable Plan**
Before traveling, create a workable plan for managing your mental health while abroad.

- If you have a medical or psychological condition that may require treatment while you are abroad, discuss this ahead of time with your doctor. A vacation or study abroad is a great opportunity to try new things, but this is not the time to experiment with not taking your medicine or mixing alcohol with medicine.
- If currently receiving mental health services — including prescription medication — find out if those services and/or medication are available at your destination.
- Consider the support system you’ll have in place while abroad. If possible, know ahead of time who you can consult with about your mental health.

**Student Counselling at Maynooth**

Maynooth provides a free and confidential counselling service to enable students to deal with personal problems which may be impeding their academic progress. Students drop in without an appointment or set up an appointment by contacting the Counselling service in the Student Services Centre by telephoning +353 1 708 3554.

**Stress**

Stress has many definitions. Stress affects everyone differently. The additional/new kinds of stress you may encounter in the country of your choice may lead to anxiety/panic disorders, depression, paranoia, eating disorders, and other phobias. Any mental health challenges you have prior to going abroad may become more severe once you experience the effects of culture shock. Even mental fatigue from constant language immersion and time change may cause the symptoms of culture shock to seem overwhelming.

**Identity and Mental Health**

One’s identity, including how it may be perceived differently abroad than at home and how it may present unique challenges in your host environment is an area for exploration and preparation. Consider the following questions and preparations from the perspective of your gender, ethnic or religious background, your sexual identity, as one with disabilities and as an U.S. American, as applicable.

- How can you prepare yourself to deal with any prejudice you may face?
- Does it matter that your cultural background, race, religion, skin color, disability, sex, or sexual orientation, etc. may place you in the minority or the majority in countries to which you will be traveling?
- I am aware of the prevailing local sentiment towards people of my cultural background, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.
- I am aware of how past and current U.S. policy has affected/affects the countries where I will visit.
- I know how to avoid confrontations over politics/religion, and how to avoid provoking unwanted attention by not flaunting my "American–ness".
- I am aware of the prevailing national sentiment towards the U.S. and U.S. citizens in the countries I will visit.