

10 things doctors want patients to know at back-to-school time

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Each year, students and their parents rush to stores to fulfill their back-to-school lists. But when preparing to go back to school—whether you’re a parent with children in elementary school or you are in your own final years of college—there are some health-related tasks to keep in mind too.

The AMA’s What Doctors Want Patients to Know™ series provides physicians with a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today’s health care headlines.

Here is a list from this series on what doctors want patients to know about essentials to prepare for going back to school.

1 Catch up on family vaccinations

Immunizations, or vaccinations, have prevented countless cases of disease and disability, and they save millions of lives each year. Yet there are still people who are sickened or disabled by preventable infectious diseases and families that mourn the devastating loss of loved ones from vaccine-preventable illnesses. An infectious diseases physician discusses what patients need to know about immunizations for the entire family.

2 Cut down on screen time

It is understandable that people are on their devices more now than ever before to remain connected. But spending too much time on screens can have negative health effects. That is why it is important to take proactive steps to cut down on screen time. Two AMA members discuss what they wanted patients to know about reducing screen time.

3 Be aware of eating disorders

This silent epidemic affects people of all ages and backgrounds, striking at the core of their physical and mental well-being. Despite its widespread impact, the gravity of eating disorders often remains concealed behind closed doors, leaving many patients with the condition to battle silently while society grapples to understand the magnitude of the issue.

4 Identify and address loneliness

Even though people are becoming more connected through social media and other outlets, the great irony is that many people still feel lonely. That loneliness, in turn, can have far-reaching implications on a person's health and well-being. Knowing how to recognize loneliness and what can help patients overcome feeling lonely is key. Two psychiatrists took time to discuss what patients need to know about loneliness as a public health issue.

5 Understand how to prevent RSV

This past flu season, children's hospitals filled up with another viral threat: respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). For this school year, to minimize the transmission and impact of RSV, several preventive measures can be implemented. Learn more from two physicians.

6 Avoid ultraprocessed foods

For people on the run, ultraprocessed food may become their go-to diet, sacrificing nutrition for convenience. While it may be convenient, consuming ultraprocessed foods on a regular basis increases a person's risk of health complications including cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, obesity and type 2 diabetes. But it can be hard to tell when these foods are on your plate. Two physicians took time to discuss what patients need to know about ultraprocessed foods and healthier steps to take.

7 Get a flu shot when the time comes

Getting a flu shot is of utmost importance this year to protect oneself and the community from the influenza virus. By taking this simple yet impactful step, individuals can play an active role in promoting public health and well-being. Learn more about the influenza vaccine ahead of the flu season.

8 Prevent the spread of norovirus

It seems as though everyone has experienced the sudden turn of the stomach, causing a mad rush to the bathroom due to vomiting, diarrhea or both. And, unfortunately, remaining near the bathroom may be the only plan for the next day or two. The most likely culprit is norovirus, and it can happen to anyone at any time. Two family physicians share what to do and how to prevent norovirus infection.

9 Improve your eye health

Good vision is essential for our daily lives, yet many people take their eye health for granted. From lifestyle changes to regular checkups, an ophthalmologist shares what to know about eye health and how to prevent eye diseases. An ophthalmologist shares what patients need to know about improving their eye health.

10 Practice healthy sleep habits

From school stress to illnesses, there are many factors that can interfere with a good night's sleep, yet it can be hard to pinpoint what steps to take to improve sleep hygiene. Two sleep medicine physicians took time to discuss what doctors want patients to know about getting a good night's rest.