



STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dear IU Instructor,

The Indiana University Student Health Center (SHC) does not provide excuses for students who miss classes, assignments, or tests secondary to short term illness, injury, or mental health problems. This is a revised policy as of August 2019 and is consistent with the policies of our peer institutions regarding medical/psychological excuse notes.

The SHC is willing to work with students who have ongoing or serious illness, injury or disability to provide care and documentation as necessary. The Office of Disability Services for Students also specializes in assisting students with various disabilities to achieve their academic goals.

Often students seek care at the SHC for the purpose “to get a note” for illnesses and problems that do not otherwise require professional attention, such as viral upper respiratory infections and self-limited gastrointestinal illnesses. This is problematic for many reasons:

1. It creates a financial hardship on students who have to use insurance coverage or pay the out of pocket for a medical office visit in order to obtain a “note”. It penalizes students who do not have insurance coverage that we accept or are unable to afford the fee in order to stay on par with their peers who are able to afford this charge.
2. It creates an overload on our services and we cannot see all the patients who need to be seen for other reasons.
3. It can increase the spread of communicable illnesses.
4. Often these students come in to be seen after the illness or problem and the provider has no verifiable way to know if the student was actually ill or incapacitated, relying solely on the student’s history. As medical and mental health professionals, we take the student’s report as the truth.
5. The student may fabricate illnesses or exaggerate symptoms in order to obtain a note and then that report becomes a permanent part of their medical or mental health record.
6. Requiring a visit to the SHC is a time burden on the student.
7. Many students state that an instructor requires written or specific medical/psychological information to be excused from a class. Requiring a student to share this private information compromises patient confidentiality and creates a problem on how that information may be shared with others.
8. Most importantly, it is counter to our mission of educating our students to be wise consumers of healthcare when we require them to seek out professional medical or psychological care when self-care is sufficient.

For these reasons, we feel the decision to excuse a student from class should be based on a conversation between the student and the instructor, without requiring a medical or mental health provider to become involved.

Sincerely,

Beth C Rupp, MD
Medical Director
Indiana University Student Health Center