

Mental Health for Pre-Meds

Studies have shown that premedical students have a high prevalence of depression and that medical students often display signs of burnout and suicidal ideation^{1,2}. In fact, male physicians have a higher suicide rate than the rest of the male population; that rate is higher still in female doctors³. Premed students have an unusual amount of pressure placed on their shoulders, since their performance in undergraduate classes is tantamount to their success in their applications to medical school later. Too often do they place grades as their priority, even over their own health and well-being at times. Awareness of the importance of maintaining their mental health is an important first step, as well as learning about the mental health resources available to them.

At SMU, there are resources available to students dealing with mental health issues. Counseling and psychiatric services are available for currently enrolled SMU students free of charge. To make an appointment to speak with a mental health professional, go to <https://www.smu.edu/StudentAffairs/HealthCenter/Counseling/CAPSAppointments>.

Tips for managing mental health:

- **Create a routine.**
- **Put limits on work hours.**
- **Give yourself a break.**
- **Be realistic.**
- **Understand you can't do everything.**
- **Cut back if needed.**
- **Relax with hobbies.**
- **Give yourself plenty of time.**
- **Spend time with friends.**
- **Don't let yourself get run down.**
- **Learn time management skills.**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.**
- **Keep in touch with family and friends.**
- **Build new friendships.**
- **Expect things to change.**
- **Understand that it may take time to fit in.**
- **Don't let stress get the best of you.**
- **Realize you don't have to please everyone.**
- **Know the signs of depression.**
- **Build on your confidence.**
- **Find strength in numbers.**
- **Volunteer.**
- **Get involved on campus.**
- **Set goals.**

For more SMU-specific mental health resources, please see the SMU Health Center or visit <https://www.smu.edu/StudentAffairs/HealthCenter/Counseling>. For general mental health resources, please see <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/index.html>.

Remember that you are not alone and that asking for help is an option.

Sources:

1. Dyrbye L.N., Thomas M.R., Massie F.S., Power D.V., Eacker A., Harper W. Burnout and suicidal ideation among US medical students. *Ann Intern Med.* 2008;149:334–341.
2. Fang DZ, Young CB, Golshan S, Fellows I, Moutier C, Zisook S. Depression in premedical undergraduates: a cross-sectional survey. *Prim Care Companion. J Clin Psychiatry.* 2010; 12:e1–e6.
3. Schernhammer ES, Colditz GA. Suicide rates among physicians: a quantitative and gender assessment (meta-analysis). *Am J Psychiatry.* 2004 Dec;161(12):2295-302.
4. https://healthservices.camden.rutgers.edu/topics_wellness