

Frequently Asked Medical/Dental Questions

What is the Office of Health Services?

The Office of Services (OHS) at USMMA is located at Patten Hall and provides healthcare services to USMMA Midshipmen. Healthcare services include: routine sea year physical assessments; medical laboratory procedures; immunizations (required for sea year clearance); treatment of routine illnesses; assistance with prescribed medications and pharmaceutical supplies; public health prevention education; annual oral evaluations, general dentistry and dental hygiene; and individual or group counseling sessions for maintaining personal wellness.

What happens if I am too sick to be cared for at Office of Health Services?

Students will be evaluated at OHS. If a determination is made that they require a higher level of care they will be transported to the nearest emergency room. Transportation will be arranged by the clinic staff and evaluated on an individual basis.

What is a “sick chit”?

A sick chit is a written pass that is given to an injured or sick student from a health care provider. This provides special instruction and/or permission to be excused from class and/or activities.

If I have not received any routine childhood immunizations, can I still attend the USMMA?

Those individuals that were not immunized are allowed to attend the USMMA. However, this will jeopardize the Sea Year requirements as the shipping companies require vaccinations in order to assign a Midshipman to a ship for Sea Duty.

If I only received 1 dose of Hepatitis A will I be able to attend INDOC?

Hepatitis A is a series of 2 shots that are given 6 months apart by your primary care physician. If the second dose was not given prior to INDOC you need to make an appointment with your private doctor during Thanksgiving or Christmas break for the second dose. The USMMA does not vaccinate against Hepatitis A. We can make an appointment for you to go to a travel clinic or the department of health but you are responsible for any fees incurred. Failure to receive the 2nd dose of Hepatitis A may result in an inability to be medically cleared to go to sea.

Our family physician said the Tdap (Tetanus toxoid, Diphtheria, Pertussis) vaccine is usually given every 10 years. Why does the USMMA want it given every 5 years?

The Tdap vaccine will be administered after 5 years because there is a higher risk of infection when going out to sea. Some of the vaccine may be less effective throughout the 10 years, so a booster shot is recommended after 5 years.

Which vaccinations will I receive as a midshipman in preparation for Sea Duty?

You will receive Yellow Fever, Typhoid and Flu vaccinations in preparation for sea. If indicated, an updated Tetanus (Tdap) will also be administered. Administration of these vaccines will be

Frequently Asked Medical/Dental Questions

provided at the Office of Health Services. Information will be provided at the time of administration regarding the vaccination and any possible side effects or reactions.

Will I be required to receive a small pox vaccine?

This will be determined by the shipping company once a shipping assignment has been made. If necessary, small pox vaccine will be administered by the shipping company.

Can medications be brought to INDOC?

Plebe Candidates are instructed NOT to bring any over-the counter medications with them. If they are brought to indoctrination they will be collected from all Plebe Candidates upon their arrival. This includes but is not limited to any pain medication (e.g. Tylenol, Aleve, Advil, aspirin, ibuprofen); allergy medications, antihistamine; decongestants; herbal supplements or remedies; vitamins and nutritional or sports supplements.

The Office of Health Services will not be responsible for the return of any over-the-counter medication.

Plebe candidates should NOT bring any prescription medications with them unless the medication is specifically prescribed for them. There must be an accompanying note from the prescribing physician or dentist stating the reason why the medication was prescribed. These medications will be collected, identified and be recorded in the Candidate's health record before being returned.

Any medication that is not in its original container or is unlabeled will be confiscated and disposed of by the Academy's Office of Health Services without exception.

Do I have to take out my wisdom teeth if there is room in my mouth for them to grow?

If your wisdom teeth are fully erupted (no flap of skin covering the tooth) and there's room in your mouth for them to grow out, then extraction is not required. If during your sea duty dental clearance exam, your wisdom teeth are partially erupted, you are required to remove the wisdom teeth. Partial eruption of a wisdom tooth creates a flap of gum tissue next to the tooth. The flap can trap bits of food and debris. It can turn into a hotbed for bacteria. While out at sea you might not have access to dental or medical care, therefore partially erupted wisdom teeth must come out to avoid a potential risk of infection.

Is there a waiting period from the day of my wisdom teeth extraction and the date of my sea year clearance?

After the extraction, you must be monitored by a dentist for at least four weeks before you can be cleared because it is possible to have postoperative complications (such as dry socket). Therefore, plan ahead and do not wait until the deadline date to make an appointment. It is also recommended to have the extraction done during the summer, Thanksgiving, winter or spring break to avoid disruptions in academic and extracurricular activities.

Frequently Asked Medical/Dental Questions

How can I request to be seen in Counseling during INDOC?

The physical and mental well-being of every Plebe Candidate is the priority at all times. As such, each Plebe Candidate can access all medical services (including Counseling) at any time during INDOC by simply requesting it to Regimental staff, athletic trainers, USMMA EMTs, or any other Academy staff. In addition, there are scheduled times set aside (e.g., morning sick call) when a nurse is available to receive a Plebe Candidate's request for an appointment.

I expect that INDOC will be a big adjustment for me. What do I do if it starts to seem like it's too much once I get there?

INDOC is a BIG adjustment and a BIG stress for each Plebe Candidate (even if most Candidates don't say so out loud). Many Candidates initially report feeling "totally stressed out." If these feelings ever start to interfere with your training, your sleep, your appetite or your sense of well-being, ask to be seen in Medical, describe your situation, and we will work with you to find the best solution for you.

What preventative measures can be taken to minimize the risk of injury or illness during INDOC?

Prior to INDOC it is important to get yourself in shape by exercising and running daily. Wearing proper fitting sneakers that have been "broken in" is very helpful. During INDOC, it is extremely important to maintain proper hygiene and wash your hands frequently. In addition, it is important to drink water frequently throughout the day to stay well hydrated. We recommend drinking water in smaller amounts frequently rather than "chugging."

Why is it important for me to disclose my full medical information?

It is essential that your complete past medical history is made known so that any issues can be resolved as soon as possible. In the past, there have been situations when non-disclosure of prior medical issues has resulted in a medical disqualification. Had this information been disclosed immediately, the students involved may have been eligible for a medical waiver to attend and or continue at the USMMA.

Office of Health Services staff is committed to optimizing the health and well-being of midshipmen. We work closely with the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard to ensure that midshipmen maintain their medical eligibility for licensing and commissioning. It is always best to bring any new medical issues to the attention of the medical staff immediately. They will work to ensure the best possible resolution.

What basic services are provided by USMMA OHS?

All medical & dental care that can be provided on site at USMMA Office of Health Services in support of the Midshipman Program is considered to meet the definition of "limited medical & dental care" referred to in "Title 46: Shipping, PART 310—MERCHANT MARINE TRAINING, Subpart C - Admission and Training of Midshipmen at the United States Merchant Marine Academy. Specifically,

Frequently Asked Medical/Dental Questions

§ 310.62 (a) Items furnished: Each midshipman shall receive: Free tuition, quarters and subsistence; limited medical and dental care; and certain travel expenses,"

Limited medical & dental care includes any and all care needs that can be managed on site at USMMA within the confines of Patten Hall. Insurance will not be required for this onsite care. Any offsite healthcare intervention, outside of Patten Hall, required to support onsite care or if the onsite care needs exceed the capabilities of our onsite facility, said care will become an insurance billable event from offsite healthcare providers.

What happens in the event of a medical emergency?

The Academy supported EMS Squad which is supervised and operated under the Office of Health Services, provides emergency medical services to the Midshipmen. There is only one emergency number to request an ambulance. It is 516.726.5858. Use of the USMMA EMS service is considered part of the minimal medical care standard. There is no charge for these ambulance services.

Exactly what services are provided on site by the Office of Health Services?

The Office of Health Services at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy is equipped to manage most nonspecific care needs to maintain medical and dental standards. However, health care needs requiring a specialist's intervention or other higher level of health care will need to be managed off campus as an insurance billable event.