Jane Reno-Munro, director of student health services at the College of Charleston, has been on the front lines of student health for nearly 17 years. As students resume classes today, she shares some observations of health patterns and concerns for college students.

"During the summer, we see a fraction of the students that we see during the school year, so it's not easy to see patterns. In November, we tend to see a lot of colds, strep throats and mono. In February, we are definitely seeing a lot of students with flu or flulike illnesses, and in April many more allergy-related illnesses.

"Although we still see some upper-respiratory illness in the summer, we also see more injuries and also jellyfish stings and sunburn.

"Upper respiratory illnesses are our chief reason for a visit to Student Health Services. This includes viral illnesses, bronchitis, sinusitis, strep throat and ear infections.

"When students first come to campus and begin living and studying in close quarters, the germs tend to get pooled and make their rounds. Probably the freshmen are the most vulnerable since many of these organisms are new to them.

"Another big part of what we do is to teach our students how to utilize a health care system effectively. When you consider that many students have never scheduled their own appointment before coming to college, it really is a big step for them to recognize they need help, call for an appointment and arrive on time.

"We give the students a lot of kudos for figuring this out, and we like to make it as easy as we can for them to do so.

"The College of Charleston is primarily women, so we do a lot of women's health -- some gynecological problems, contraceptive management and occasional infections.

"The college has made study abroad an important part of the liberal arts education experience. As well, many students are traveling independently all over the world to perform service to communities, building schools, working in clinics and teaching.

"The college offers a comprehensive travelers' health consultation service, which includes all of the immunizations students would need even in the most exotic locations. The key is to plan early to get the maximum immunity.
"Our ... website, http://studenthealth.cofc.edu, is packed with good information for students and families. ... There are also decision trees students can use to help them decide when to seek care."

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