

From: My MD-to-Be (info@MyMDtoBe.com)
Subject: Winter Break in Medical School

For More Resources Like This,
Visit <http://MyMDtoBe.com>



WINTER BREAK IN MEDICAL SCHOOL



During time off from school, students enjoy catching up on sleep and reconnecting with loved ones

WHAT IS WINTER BREAK LIKE IN MEDICAL SCHOOL?

First-year medical students will have a winter break from school during the holiday season. Similar to college and high school breaks, there will be no scheduled classes or assignments due during this time. Winter break is a time for rejuvenation and self-care. If attending medical school is like running a marathon, winter break provides a short period when no running is required, during which students can

focus on their own wellness and taking care of themselves. This is an important opportunity for students to recharge and prepare for a long stretch of rigorous, demanding studies. It is also a time for students to reflect on their first few months in medical school, and set new goals for the coming months.

While winter break is a time to relax, rejuvenate, and reconnect, many medical students also use this time for studying, planning, and preparing for their studies after winter break.

HOW DO MEDICAL STUDENTS EXPERIENCE WINTER BREAK?

Many students are ready to relax and catch up on much-needed sleep by the time their winter break begins. Some students may be physically exhausted and require a lot of sleep, while other may be eager to reconnect with family and friends and to enjoy their free time more actively. Life everything else in 2020, winter break is limited by COVID-19. Students have less opportunities for social contact and even fewer opportunities for travel, which can be frustrating for students who have been studying very hard for many months, and looking forward to time to enjoy with their loved ones.

At the start of their break, many medical students are still adjusting to being medical students. Some students may feel relieved by being able to physically leave the medical school and spend time away from it and from classes. Others may feel anxious about the amount of studying they need to do, and be more inclined to spend their free time reviewing material they learned and preparing for their studies.

While on break from medical school and reconnecting with friends, students may face their first serious soul-searching regarding their decision to attend medical school. They may see friends who are working, traveling, or pursuing other types of studies or activities. Realizing that the enormous amount of intensive studies they just completed is only the first step on their path to becoming a doctor, they may wonder if medical school was the right decision for them. This may not be the first time this question will come up, and certainly will not be the last. It is a normal part of pursuing any kind of challenging education. There are times when students will feel discouraged about the intense, demanding nature of their training; at other times, students will feel proud and energized by being so intellectually stimulated. Often, students will experience a combination of both reactions.

Connecting with family members brings its own share of joys and challenges. Many students enjoy being taken care of, while bristling at being treated like children. This is a challenge for virtually all grown children and their parents, and medical school can make it more extreme, as students are quickly becoming experts in their field of study (which naturally results in feeling more like hyper-competent, independent adults), while often feeling exhausted and overwhelmed (which naturally results in wanting to be taken care of).

After spending some time catching up on sleep and relaxing, students will often have a more active period, both physically and socially. Students may try activities that they have been putting "on hold" for a long time, like an art project, an intriguing recipe, or a new type of exercise routine. Resting and pleasurable activities are both important aspects of self-care, and winter break is a perfect time for both.

Although students have a break from school, some students set academic goals for this time. Many will set aside some time for reviewing material they found more challenging, or prepare in advance for upcoming lectures and labs. Others will choose to enjoy every last minute of their time away from school. There is no one "right" way to spend this precious time, and students will decide what will be most helpful for them.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY STUDENT REGARDING WINTER BREAK?

- Before winter break, talk with your student to understand how she would like to spend her winter break. Here are some things you could ask:
 - How tired are you? How much time do you think you will want to rest? (Sam may not know exactly, but it could give you a hint about when NOT to invite many relatives)
 - Are there specific things that are important for you to do during the break? (one-on-one time with certain people, eating a favorite dish, visiting a special place, etc.)
 - How much do you plan to study during break? (your student may not know exactly, but it will help you have a sense of how available she will be, which can help avoid confusion and disappointments)

- If there are specific activities that your student is interested in, offer to help her schedule and/or coordinate these activities, so she can spend less time on logistics and more on enjoying the break.
- If you would like to have some one-on-one time with your student, don't be shy about asking her if she'd like that, and scheduling it into your time together.
- Remember that your student may want to spend one-on-one time with other people, too. Help her schedule and ensure she makes time for these other commitments.
- Find some time to talk with your student about medical school – it can be when relaxing at home together, while taking a walk, or as you are driving together to visit a relative. Here are some questions you could ask:
 - How do you feel about your decision to go to medical school? (don't be afraid to ask this question, and don't be afraid of Sam's answer; it will probably be a relief for her to be able to share any doubts or misgivings she has, and to have you acknowledge both the excitement and the challenges of medical school, without trying to change how she feels)
 - What have you learned about yourself during your first few months in medical school?
 - Are there things you would like to intentionally do differently when you go back to medical school?
 - Who do you spend time with when you're at medical school? Who are your new friends?
 - What are your favorite places to study and to relax?
 - What do you do when you're away, other than studying?
 - What are your favorite things about going to medical school?
- During the break, be as flexible as you can, recognizing that your student may experience needs she was not anticipating in advance. Medical school is very structured and demanding; break offers a special opportunity for your student to have power over how she chooses to spend her time.
- Enjoy your time together!

LEARN MORE ABOUT WINTER BREAK IN MEDICAL SCHOOL:

- [Winter Break, New Year's Resolutions, and Discipline](#) / Med School Insiders (Blog)

For More Resources Like This, Visit <http://MyMDtoBe.com>