

Tips to Prevent Childhood Illness

Keeping your students healthy can be a challenge, but there are things that parents can do to help prevent the spread of illness.

The most important prevention technique for any infectious illness is handwashing. Teach children to wash their hands with soap and water frequently for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating and after using the toilet. If soap and water is unavailable, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Teach children basic health practices to decrease their chance of illness:

Preventing the spread of respiratory illness such as colds and flu

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes with your hands.
- Avoid sharing drinks, water bottles, silverware and pencils
- Cover your nose and mouth with a clean tissue, and immediately dispose of it in the trash after using,, or use the inside of your sleeve, if a tissue is not available. Coughing or sneezing into your hands distributes germs on your hands that spread to other surfaces you touch such as desks, doorknobs, etc.

Preventing the spread of noroviruses, a group of viruses that cause gastroenteritis (the stomach flu)

- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Wash soiled linens and clothes immediately in hot water and soap / detergent.
- Flush vomit and stool and ensure the surrounding area is kept clean.
- People infected with the norovirus should not prepare food while they are infected or for 3 days after they have recovered.
- Use a solution made with one part bleach, to ten parts water to clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces, including frequently handled toys.

Preventing the spread of skin infections such as staph or MRSA

- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Shower after sports practices and games.
- Do not share personal items such as uniforms, towels, or personal equipment such as razors.
- Wash uniforms and towels in hot water and detergent after each use and dry on hottest setting.
- Clean and cover all wounds with clean, dry dressings. Open breaks in the skin (cuts, grazes) are an entryway for infection.
- See your physician for any pimples, boils, abscesses, rashes, impetigo, skin infections
- Follow the doctor's treatment plan
- Keep all skin infections covered with clean dressings until healed.
- Take antibiotics as prescribed. Do not share or save antibiotics.
- Do not ask for antibiotics for viral illness, such as colds and flu. Antibiotics do not work on viruses.

General health measures to boost your child's immune system include:

- Drinking plenty fluids to keep well hydrated.
- Eating a nutritious, well balanced diet, with lots of fruits and vegetables
- Getting plenty of rest and a good night's sleep.
- Exercising regularly.

General measures to decrease / prevent illness

- Pack easy to use products like disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizers
- Schedule an annual flu vaccine for your child
- Schedule a doctors appointment if your child has symptoms of the flu (fever, chills, headache, non productive cough, sore throat, muscle aches and pains, and moderate to severe chest discomfort). Anti viral medication can decrease the length and severity of the flu if started early in the illness.
- Schedule a doctors appointment if your child had a fever with a sore throat and / or nausea & vomiting , or a *severe* sore throat without a fever, to rule out strep throat.
- When your child feels better clean all surfaces, launder the bedding and air out the room

Keeping children as healthy as possible in school is a combination of good health practices and keeping sick children home to help prevent the spread of illness to others.

To help prevent the spread of illness to other students:

- Keep your child home for 24 hours after any of the following:
 - fever - should be fever free without medication for 24 hours before return.
 - vomiting, - should not return until 24 hours after last vomited and is back on a regular diet
 - diarrhea. – should be free of diarrhea for 24 hours before return.

- Check with your child' doctor as to when your child may return to school any time you need to consult a doctor concerning your child's illness, after a rash illness and if put on an antibiotic.

Always notify the school office when your child needs to stay home due to illness.