

A letter from your school nurse:

As the flu and newest coronavirus continue to make news headlines, I would like to review some measures that may help your family stay healthier this season and all year round.

ABOUT INFECTIONS

Illnesses like colds and flu are caused by viruses that are spread from person to person via respiratory droplets. Respiratory droplets come from coughing, or sneezing and can contaminate your hands, and other objects you touch. Norovirus, the virus that causes gastroenteritis “stomach bug”, can be found in your stool (feces), and in the contents inside your stomach. It is possible for objects to become contaminated with this germ after an infected person vomits or uses the restroom. The germs can then be transferred to your hands or food. The disease is spread when the virus accidentally gets in your mouth. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs, and that an infected person can be contagious even before they begin to feel sick. Currently there are no medications that can cure viruses, although some medications may help with the symptoms.

HANDWASHING AND HEALTH HYGIENE

Please review the following healthy hygiene habits with your child and family. Encourage them to practice these habits all day every day.

1. Always wash your hands with soap and water:

- a. Before eating. Remember you can become infected with germs if they get into your mouth.
- b. After using the bathroom.
- c. After taking care of pets
- d. After taking care of sick family members.
- e. And after touching the garbage.

2. Use hand sanitizer routinely (should be at least 60% alcohol based).

Remind your child to use the hand sanitizer during class, after PE, after recess, when switching classrooms, after shopping, and after touching doorknobs.

3. Cough or sneeze into the sleeve of their shirt, or into their elbow to avoid getting respiratory droplets on their hands and possibly spreading to surfaces or people.

4. Do not to share cups, water bottles, or eating utensils. The most effective way to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria is to wash your hands often. Everyone should wash their hands with soap and warm water routinely, making sure to scrub for 20 seconds and to clean under your nails (A recommendation to help your child wash long enough is to have them sing a song such as “Happy Birthday” or “Mary had a little lamb” 2 times, or the “ABC” song one time silently to themselves while scrubbing).

SHOULD MY SICK CHILD GO TO SCHOOL TODAY?

The following school health guidelines should help in deciding whether your child is well enough to attend school for the day.

Children should NOT be at school if:

1. They have had a fever in the last 24 hours or have been taking medication for fever in the last 24 hours (a fever is usually classified as a body temperature of 100.4F (38 C) or higher).
2. They have had 2 or more episodes of nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea in the last 24hrs, or have been taking medication for nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea in the last 24hrs (consult your doctor before giving or taking medication to stop diarrhea. Contact your child's doctor immediately if nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea continue for more than 24hrs.
3. They have multiple symptoms which are obvious signs of illness, such as recent vomiting, cough, malaise, congestion, and body aches (with or without fever)
4. They have a large rash that cannot be kept covered throughout the entire school day. These children can usually return to class if they have been cleared by their doctor, or the when the rash resolves.

In the event that your child has signs and symptoms of illness such as fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, congestion, or if you have a concern about their health, it is recommended that you notify your child's physician for further instructions.

*If your child is sent home from the clinic with an elevated temperature, or signs of gastroenteritis they should stay home on the following day to focus on adequate fluid intake, eating nutritious foods, and rest, as well as to protect others from exposure to the virus or bacteria that may have triggered the symptoms.

Sometimes it is difficult to decide in the morning whether a child is well enough to attend school. You can ask yourself, "Can my child go through the day with minimal disruption to himself and others?"

PARTNERS IN PREVENTION

Preventing the spread of diseases is a community wide effort and should be a priority in our everyday lives. The simplest, most cost-effective way to minimizing the spread of germs is to wash our hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap. Children gain the most of their education by being healthy, in class, and ready to learn every day. Together we can make that happen!

Sincerely,

Chavone Robinette, BSN, RN