

THE FLU: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW TO KEEP KIDS HEALTHY

With flu season upon us, it is important that we work together to keep our children and school healthy. By keeping our children flu-free, we benefit the community as a whole. Additionally, healthy students miss fewer days of school, which results in less stress on the family. Following are answers to frequently asked questions about the flu and how to help protect your child.

WHAT IS THE FLU?

- The flu is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the lungs, nose and throat.
- Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and sometimes, can lead to death.
- Each year in the United States:
 - 5-20 percent of Americans fall ill to the flu.
 - Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu, and they frequently spread the virus to others.
- Young children are at the greatest risk for developing serious flu complications, as well as the elderly and those with certain health conditions.

HOW DOES FLU SPREAD?

- There are two ways to get the flu. Usually flu is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Occasionally, people can get the flu from touching a germ-infested surface.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS OF FLU?

Often we get confused about the symptoms of the flu and how they are different from a common cold. Knowing the symptoms of the flu is important and will help you act quickly to get your child feeling better faster.

- Common symptoms of flu include: high fever, severe headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion and dry cough.
- Children often have additional flu symptoms that are rare in adults, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Symptoms of a common cold include: stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and hacking cough.

SIMPLE STEPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CHILD HEALTHY

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent your child from getting the flu is to take him/her to get a flu vaccine.
- You should talk to your child about practicing good health habits, such as:
 - Washing hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use of the hand sanitizer.
 - Covering mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, and disposing of the tissue in a proper trash receptacle.
 - Avoiding sharing drinks, water bottles or silverware with others.
- You can help prevent the flu from spreading at home by disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, toys and other commonly shared items.
- Also, if someone in your household gets the flu, a doctor can prescribe a medication – called an antiviral – that can actually prevent other members of the household from catching the flu.

- Studies show that some antiviral medications are up to 89 percent effective in preventing the flu when taken once daily for seven days.

DON'T TAKE THE FLU LYING DOWN

- If you are concerned about your child's flu symptoms, call your doctor early. Call your doctor immediately if your child has a chronic disease. Some children may benefit from an antiviral medication, which can be prescribed by a physician and can help lessen the duration of the virus and reduce the risk of complications, such as pneumonia.
 - To be effective, antiviral medication should be taken within 12-48 hours after flu symptoms begin.
- If your child has the flu, it is important for them to stay home from school, rest, and drink plenty of fluids.
- Additionally, notify your school nurse/health clinic assistant if your child has the flu. Monitoring flu incidence will help keep students, faculty and our community healthy.

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