Cold & Flu Season: Tips from the School Nurse

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Now that the fall season is underway and the winter months are ahead, keeping our school healthy takes all of us working together. This time of year naturally brings a rise in common winter viruses, including the flu, RSV, and COVID-19. We want to do everything we can to look out for our entire school community - by practicing a few simple healthy routines, we can protect our students and staff and keep everyone safe and in school!

When to Keep Your Child Home

Please keep your child home from school if they are sick to help prevent the spread of illness. Follow these guidelines before sending your child back to school:

- **Fever:** Your child must stay home until they have been completely **fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication**.
- **Improving Respiratory Symptoms:** Respiratory symptoms (such as a cough, runny nose, or sore throat) must be **steadily improving for at least 24 hours** before they return. Your child needs to be fever-free **AND** have improving symptoms at the same time before returning to school.
- **Stomach Bugs:** If your child has a stomach illness, they should not return until they have been completely free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.
- **Practicing Good Hygiene Everyday:** When your child returns to school, please remind them to pay extra attention to washing their hands and covering their coughs to help protect their classmates while they finish getting better.

Top Defense Tips for Families

Simple habits at home and school make a big difference in stopping germs.

- **Wash Hands Often:** Remind your child to scrub their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Encourage handwashing before meals and after recess.
- **Cover Coughs and Sneezes:** Teach your child to cough or sneeze directly into a tissue or their inner elbow/sleeve, rather than their bare hands. Throw tissues away immediately.
- **Keep Hands Away from Faces:** Remind your child to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth, where germs easily enter the body.
- **No Sharing:** Remind your child to keep water bottles, cups, snacks, and eating utensils strictly to themselves.
- **Prioritize Rest:** Ensure your child gets adequate sleep each night. School-age children generally need 9 to 11 hours of sleep to help their immune systems function at their best.
- **Fuel and Hydrate:** A balanced diet and a healthy breakfast provide the vitamins and minerals your child needs. Drinking plenty of fluids, especially water, supports body function and prevents dehydration
- **Dress for the Weather:** Layer up! Fresh air and outdoor physical activities are important for wellness, even on cooler days.
- **Consider Vaccinations:** Staying up-to-date with routine immunizations is an effective way to protect your family. We encourage you to speak with your healthcare provider about seasonal flu shots and updated vaccines.

Our Ongoing Efforts

Our school maintains rigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols, focusing on high-touch surfaces in classrooms and common areas.

If your child becomes ill during the school day, you will be contacted to pick them up as soon as possible. Please make sure your contact numbers are kept up-to-date with the school office so we can reach you quickly if needed.

Thank you for working alongside us to keep our classrooms safe and our kids happy, healthy, and ready to learn!

CDC Resources: For more details on managing respiratory illnesses, you can review CDC Respiratory Virus Prevention (https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/index.html)