

## A Note from Your Health Services Team- October

### **Common Childhood Illnesses**

We are heading into our colder seasons when we typically see an increase in the number of ill students. Use common sense when deciding whether or not your child is too ill to attend school. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Is my child well enough to do the activities of the school day? If not, keep your child at home.
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? If so, keep your child at home.
- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition? If so, keep your child at home.
- Has my child been fever-free, vomit-free, or diarrhea-free for 24 hours? If not, keep your child at home.

### **Ear Infections**

Young children are prone to ear infections because of their small auditory tubes. These tubes connect the ears to the throat, and they may get blocked when a cold causes inflammation. This traps fluid inside the middle ear, behind the eardrum, allowing germs to breed. The symptoms include fever and ear pain. Many ear infections are due to viruses and go away on their own. Childhood vaccinations help prevent infections from certain bacteria that can cause ear infections.

### **Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease**

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease causes a fever along with blisters on the inside of the mouth, the palms of the hands, the buttocks, and the soles of the feet. In the U.S., it is usually caused by coxsackie virus A16. This virus tends to spread among children during summer and early fall. Most cases are not serious and last a week to 10 days.

### **Pink Eye**

Tearing, redness, itching, and crusty eyelashes are all signs of conjunctivitis, commonly called pink eye. Often caused by the same viruses as the common cold, pink eye spreads rapidly in schools and day care centers. Consult your pediatrician to determine whether your child needs treatment. Most cases clear up in four to seven days.

### **Fifth's Disease**

Often called "slapped cheek" disease, fifth's disease causes a bright red rash on a child's face. A rash may also appear on the torso, arms, or legs. The culprit is human parvovirus B19, a virus that may cause mild cold-like symptoms before the rash is seen. Once the rash appears, the child

is usually no longer contagious. Up to 20% of kids get it by age 5, and up to 60% have had it by age 19. The rash usually disappears in seven to 10 days.

## **Strep Throat**

Most kids get a sore throat now and then, usually due to a cold virus. So how can you tell if it's caused by the strep bacteria? Sneezing, a runny nose, or cough point to a cold. Signs of strep include a sore throat that lasts more than a week, painful or difficult swallowing, headache, a rash, stomachache with vomiting sometimes, pus in the back of the throat, or fever over 100.4 degrees. Strep throat is treated with antibiotics.

## **Impetigo**

Impetigo is another bacterial skin infection. It most commonly causes clusters of tiny blisters on the skin that ooze and form a golden crust. Touching the fluid can spread the infection to other parts of the body or other people. It is often caused by staph bacteria but also can be caused by strep bacteria. This type of impetigo is most common in kids ages 2 to 6. If treated with antibiotics, the sores usually heal without leaving scars.

## **Ringworm**

Yet another skin infection, ringworm is actually caused by a fungus -- no worms involved. It causes a red, itchy, scaly ring on the skin or a round patch of hair loss on the scalp. The fungus spreads easily from child to child, so sharing combs, brushes, towels, and clothes should be avoided. Ringworm is treated with antifungal medication.

## **Influenza**

Is it a cold or the flu? These illnesses can have similar symptoms. Influenza, or the "flu" more commonly causes high fever, chills, body aches, extreme fatigue, and nausea or vomiting. While most children get better on their own, the flu can lead to serious complications like pneumonia, especially in younger children. The CDC recommends an annual flu vaccination for anyone, including adults, older than 6 months.

## **Head Lice**

Lice are a common problem in elementary schools. It is not due to uncleanliness. Most children with lice complain about an itchy head. Lice are small insects that do not fly or leap. They are about the size of a sesame seed and the eggs, called nits, are attached to a single hair shaft about ¼ inch from the scalp. There are many over-the-counter products that can kill lice. It is important to follow the directions carefully and remove all nits. Children need to be checked by the school nurse before re-entering school after they have been treated for lice. Just as important as treating the child is proper washing of personal items such as bed linens, coats, hats, combs, and brushes.

## **Viral gastroenteritis**

Although it's commonly called stomach flu, gastroenteritis isn't the same as influenza. Real flu (influenza) affects only your respiratory system — your nose, throat and lungs. Gastroenteritis, on the other hand, attacks your intestines, causing signs and symptoms, such as watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea or vomiting, and sometimes fever. Depending on the cause, symptoms may appear within one to three days after you're infected and can range from mild to severe. Symptoms usually last just a day or two, but occasionally they may persist as long as 10 days. There's no effective treatment for the stomach flu except for self-care measures.

### **!!!!!! PREVENTION !!!!!**

The best preventive measure for all of the above conditions is proper hand washing. Teach your child to wash their hands before eating, after toileting, after playing outside, and after contact with animals. Wash all open wounds and cover them with a band aid.

Encourage good public health manners like covering your cough and sneeze.

Flu shots are highly recommended!

<http://www.webmd.com/children/ss/slideshow-childhood-illnesses-to-know>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/viral-gastroenteritis/basics/treatment/con-20019350>