

Tips for Preventing Colds, Flu and Most Other Viruses!

There are always people in the community with viral illnesses (the common cold is a viral illness). Most of the time no one knows which viruses they are, and most people recover without any type of medical treatment.

Babies too young to be immunized, elderly adults and people with compromised immune systems can be at risk of becoming very ill from common viruses that do not make most healthy people ill. If you or someone you care for falls into this category, take extra care to observe for symptoms of a serious illness (fever greater than 100°F, difficulty breathing, a change in level of consciousness, or uncontrolled vomiting). Some health-care providers want to know when their patients are exposed to people who are ill.

Here are some tips for avoiding viral illnesses and staying healthy this school year:

- 1) **WASH YOUR HANDS** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before eating or touching your face, after going to the bathroom, changing diapers or any time your hands are dirty - this is the best way to avoid illness.
- 2) **DO THE VAMPIRE SNEEZE.** Cough into your elbow. Do not cover your sneeze/cough with just your hand. If you sneeze or cough into your hands, wash them afterward. Use hand sanitizer if no soap and water is available, then wash your hands when you can.
- 3) **DO NOT TOUCH YOUR EYES, NOSE AND MOUTH-** this is how viruses can enter your body.
- 4) **SHARING IS NOT CARING.** Do not share forks, spoons, cups or other eating utensils with anyone else.
- 5) **GERMS BE GONE!** If someone at home is sick, clean common surfaces frequently.
- 6) **GET SOME REST AND RELAXATION.** Anyone with a fever (100°F or higher) should stay home until they have had NO fever for 24 hours. Not having a fever while taking medicines for fevers (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) does not count. Do not “drug and drop” your kids at school!
- 7) **DOCTOR, DOCTOR!** If you or your children are sick and experiencing any difficulty breathing, see your healthcare provider right away.