



TIPS FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE: HELP KEEP YOUR CHILD HEALTHY AND FLU-FREE

With flu season upon us, it is important that we work together to keep our children healthy. Viruses spread easily among children in schools, and families with school-age children have more infections than others, with an average of one-third of these family members infected each year. By keeping our children flu-free, we benefit the community as a whole. You can help prevent the spread of flu or help your child get better if he/she does get sick by following a few simple steps:

- If possible, you and your child should get a flu shot
- Remind your child to cover his/her nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and dispose of the tissue immediately. If a tissue is not available, sneeze or cough into his or her sleeve
- Have your child wash his/her hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces and shared items at least once a day
- Ensure that bathrooms are stocked with soap, hand towels and tissues
- Teach your child not to touch his/her mouth, nose and eyes
- If your child is sick and has a fever, keep him/her at home to prevent the spread of illness to others. Your child may return to school after he or she have not experienced a fever for 24 hours. They must be free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.

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. Common symptoms of flu include high fever, severe headache, muscle and body aches, exhaustion, and dry cough. Additionally, children often exhibit other flu symptoms that are rare in adults, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Some children might benefit from an antiviral medication, which can be prescribed by a physician and can help lessen 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.

Additionally, as a preventive measure, antiviral medication may be administered to children under a doctor's care to help them avoid catching the flu from others in some special situations. For example:

- Children who have egg allergies and therefore cannot receive flu vaccine
- Children who have been vaccinated, but are at such high risk for serious complications due to a chronic condition, that extra protection is warranted
- Children who may not have received a vaccine but are exposed to flu

If you have any questions or would like additional information about preventing and treating the flu, please contact your school nurse. We also recommend the following websites:

South Dakota Department of Health: www.doh.sd.gov/H1N1.aspx

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/