Children's National ™

Tips for Parents: Staying Healthy this Flu and Cold Season

Updated December 2016

Everyday preventive actions can help slow the spread of germs that can cause many illnesses and may offer some protection against many viruses. To protect you and your family, please remember:

- **Wash Your Hands:** Handwashing is the best prevention against the spread of germs. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. Hand sanitizer gel does not work as effectively as soap and water for some virus strains. Wash your hands with soap and water before eating, drinking, and after using bathroom.
- **Avoid Close Contact:** Prevent your child from having close contact with sick people (hugging, kissing) with symptoms of contagious viruses. Symptoms include: fever, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Some people may just have vomiting or diarrhea.
- **Cover Your Cough or Sneeze:** When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth with a tissue and throw it in the trash after use. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow, not your hand. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
- **Avoid Crowded Areas:** Do not take children around large crowds (mall, movies, etc.) during high peak of cold and flu season.
- **Don't Share Germs:** Do not allow your child to share anything that goes into his/her mouth (drinking straws and cups). Don't share food this holiday season and avoid touching food at parties and gatherings.
- **Disinfect Your Home:** If someone in your house has the flu or a contagious illness, use a household disinfectant to clean surfaces. Disinfectant with bleach is preferred to clean up bathroom and other surfaces touched by someone with vomiting or diarrhea.
- **Keep Germs Away from Others:** If your child develops flu-like symptoms, keep him/her home from school or daycare. Children should stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone without using fever reduction medications. A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C.

If you have questions, contact your child's primary care physician.