

Nurses' Nook -Flu and cold prevention ...

The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get flu shots for you and your whole family. This is especially important if you have someone in your family who is particularly vulnerable such as a young baby, an elderly parent/grandparent, or someone who is immunocompromised (has cancer or similar illness). Some of these vulnerable people may not be able get the flu shot themselves so the best way to protect them is to protect the rest of the family.

The next best way to prevent getting the flu (and the common cold) is to wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands! If it sounds like the district's nurses are repeatedly beating this drum, we are!

The single most important thing you can do to minimize transmitting disease causing germs is to **wash your hands well and frequently**. Wash them before touching or eating food, after using the bathroom, changing a diaper, taking out the trash, visiting a person who is ill, blowing your nose, or after touching your pet.

Here are some tips for teaching your children about proper handwashing:

- Hand washing should take **15-20 seconds** or about enough time for your child to sing through the birthday song twice.
- Water temperature does not matter (water that is ok to touch your hands is not hot enough to kill germs) but it **needs to involve soap and scrubbing** all parts of the hands, even the fingernails.
- Hands should be dried with a paper towel (in a public toilet) and that **paper towel should be used to shut off the faucet** and if possible to open the exit door.
- In your own home, **hand towels should be changed** every 2-3 days or more often if someone in the home is ill or you have a large household.

Hand sanitizers are not a completely adequate substitute for handwashing. They are good at killing germs but **do not remove soil** from the hands. They are an acceptable alternative when soap and water is not available and during cold and flu season, keeping some with you is not a bad idea. To properly use sanitizer you should use enough to spread it all over your hands and **should keep rubbing it until it dries** (about 15-20 seconds) Sanitizer **should not be wiped off** of hands as that minimizes its germ killing properties.

As always the nurse in your child's school is available to answer any questions you might have.

*Please note that all of the school nurse offices in the district have medication disposal packs available for **FREE** for you to safely dispose of unused medication. In addition most medication can be disposed of at your local police station.*