

Nursing Needle



Winter is here. Cold weather, warm jackets, hats and gloves have come back in season. Hot chocolate with marshmallows and apple cider with cinnamon warm the body from the cool air and the kids will wish for a day of snow. But with staying inside from that cold weather, cold and flu viruses tend to thrive.

A cold is an infection of the upper respiratory system including the nose, throat, and ears. There are over 200 different viruses that can cause a cold and there is no vaccine to prevent it. A cold is transmitted when someone sneezes or coughs. The mucous droplets then floats in the air or lands on a surface. Those virus particles can live on the surface (a doorknob, desk, pencil, etc...) for up to several days. The virus then enters the body through the nose by breathing in the virus or by touching the infected surface and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. The body then goes into action. The body's immune system attempts to fight off this "invader". The white blood cells (WBC's) are the big fighters of the body and then will attack the virus. In the nose, the action of the WBC's fighting off the virus trigger a runny nose and sneezing. This action is an attempt to prevent the virus from invading other parts of the body. As the body responds to the virus, other symptoms start. They are an itchy sore throat, coughing, fever (100 degrees F), nasal congestion, tiredness and a decreased appetite. To feel better is best to get lots of daytime rest and extra sleep. Taking in extra liquids, especially warm liquids, like chicken soup, will help to break up extra mucous. Steamy showers and humidifiers provide moist air to loosen mucous in stuffy noses and help with itchy sore throats. For children with pain or fevers, Tylenol or Motrin can assist. Ensuring proper hand washing, covering your cough and using a tissue can help with the spread of germs.

Influenza is different from a cold as it is a sudden onset of illness. The fever that accompanies flu is usually over 101 degrees F. Severe tiredness, headache, and body aches are also common complaints. Runny nose, sore throat, coughing will also be common symptoms but will vary from child to child. Some children can have vomiting and diarrhea with the flu. If you believe your child has the flu, see your doctor for testing as antiviral medicines can be prescribed. Vaccines are available to prevent both the seasonal and Novel H1N1 flu. Talk to your doctor for more information and availability of the vaccine and make an appointment as soon as you are able.

A fever is the body's way of fighting an infection. Fever is not harmful and can range from 101-104 and last 2-3 days. When children are ill, they will get varying degrees of fever. The height of the temperature does not relate to the seriousness of the disease. The most important thing to remember with fever is how your child acts and responds to you. Children who drink and urinate normal when ill, NOT eating as much as usual is OK. If ever in doubt what a fever might mean, or if your child is acting ill in a way that is concerning, contact your doctor. Emergency symptoms to look for when children are ill are those who are in severe pain, limpness or those who refuse to move, wheezing or difficulty breathing, rash or purple spots, or obvious trauma or injury.

Hand washing is a key in illness prevention. Coughing and sneezing into our sleeves and staying home from school and work when we are ill will help with transmission of illness. The school policy is for students to stay home until they have been fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications like Tylenol or Motrin, for 24 hours. That way all of us can have an illness free winter.

Keep Healthy

Nurse Brandon