

Staying healthy is very important in the lives of our families, children, and school community. There are a number of ways to help children stay healthy—washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes have proven to help combat common illnesses that are contracted by children, such as strep throat. Learning to take precautions to prevent getting sick/spreading the germs and learning to recognize the symptoms of these illnesses early is critical in preventing the spread of communicable diseases and keeping your child healthy. Current illness prevention precautions have proven quite successful when implemented.

To help prevent the spread of common illnesses practice the following measures:

Hand Washing:

One of the most important illness prevention practices is to have children wash their hands frequently. After having contact with a populated area or other individuals that may be infected with a common illness a child should wash their hands using soap and water, gently rubbing their hands together. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) also found that washing hands for a minimum of 20 seconds proved the most efficient. If the child is unable to wash their hands, the use of alcohol based hand sanitizer has proven helpful in eliminating much of the disease causing bacteria.

Covering Coughs & Sneezes:

Another important practice to prevent the spread of common childhood illnesses is to cover the child's mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze. Having a disposable tissue is preferred but may not be practical in all situations. In situations that a tissue is not available or the child is not compliant, teaching them to cough or sneeze into their inner arm, at the point of the elbow, is helpful. Coughing into the inner arm, at the point of the elbow, is much more effective at preventing the spread of disease than the age old practice of covering the mouth and nose using the hands. This is because the child's hands, once made dirty, are not commonly cleaned prior to making contact with shared items.

Common Childhood Illness' Symptoms:

Recognizing symptoms early on is crucial to successfully prevent the spread of childhood illnesses. Parents should always be aware of their child's routine behaviors, activity level and temperature. While symptoms may help indicate the contraction of an illness, it may be very difficult to diagnose the illness simply by symptoms alone. For this reason it is important that children regularly visit their healthcare provider when significant health changes are noticed. Below is a list of some, but not all, of the symptoms that are associated with common childhood illnesses.

- Fever
- Headache
- Malaise (tired)
- Diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rash

- Sore throat
- cough
- Swollen lymph glands
- Excessive drooling (in young children)
- Abdominal pain

While some of these symptoms overlap with those experienced with the common cold or flu, they may indicate a more severe illness and should be evaluated by a professional healthcare provider if they persist or progress in severity. If a child is experiencing any of these symptoms it is important that they refrain from having regular contact with other individuals besides their caretaker until diagnosis, treatment, and recovery are completed.

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