



SCHOOL HEALTH

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COMMON WINTER ILLNESS

"STREP" THROAT

Often this time of year parents panic when their child develops a sore throat. Most sore throats are not strep but are viral instead. Viral infections usually cause a cough and congestion. Antibiotics will not help fight a virus.

Strep comes from one of the 80 or so strains of streptococcal bacteria, and doctors treat all of them with antibiotics. Strep will not cause a cough.

The problem with strep is that, left untreated, it can affect other parts of a child's body, including the heart valves, lungs, kidneys and ears. This can cause serious problems that can last weeks, months or even a lifetime.

Signs of strep are sore throat with pain and swelling, difficulty swallowing, fever (usually over 101 degrees), a rough red skin rash (not in all cases), swollen glands, pus or bleeding spots on tonsils, headache, abdominal pain and/or nausea.

Children diagnosed with strep throat must remain out of school and daycare for at least 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins in order to prevent the spread to other children and adults.

THE COMMON COLD

The common cold can be a huge nuisance this time of year. The common cold is caused by many different types of viruses. Usual symptoms can include sore throat, runny nose, watering eyes, sneezing, chills and a general, all-over achiness.

We do not usually keep children out of school for the common cold, as long as the nasal discharge is clear or white and the child can participate comfortably. If

the nasal discharge is yellow or green we would ask that the child not be sent to school because this could indicate another condition that may require medical treatment.

INFLUENZA

Influenza, sometimes called the flu, is a potentially serious viral disease that can make people of any age ill. Influenza can cause fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. Although most people are ill for only a few days, some have much more serious illness and need to be hospitalized. Thousands of people die each year from influenza-related complications.

Anyone who wants to reduce their chance of catching influenza may receive a flu vaccination. Since the influenza virus changes frequently, yearly vaccination is recommended for protection from influenza. "Flu shots" are especially recommended for those people who are considered "high risk". High risk categories are 65 years of age and over, chronic lung or heart disease (including asthma), those who require regular medical treatment for chronic medical conditions (diabetes, kidney, blood or suppressed immune system diseases), and children who are in frequent contact with people who are in any of the above high-risk categories.

It is recommended that the influenza vaccination be given in October or November each year. A child with the flu can return to school after 24 hours without fever or symptoms.