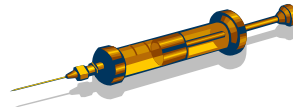




# NOTES FROM THE TRAVER NURSE – November 2009



**One VERY IMPORTANT WAY we can help to decrease the spread of the flu and many other common illnesses is to cover our mouth and nose with our elbow (not our hands) when coughing and sneezing. THE MOST IMPORTANT habit is FREQUENT hand-washing!!! Unfortunately, even with diligent hand-washing we may still get ill – November is the beginning of FLU SEASON!**



## THE FLU VACCINE - WHO NEEDS IT?

The flu vaccine helps prevent the spread of disease. In fact, vaccines are so successful in reducing the occurrence of flu that it is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that children as young as 6 months old get immunized with the flu vaccine. It's easy to see that no matter how old your child is, it's important to contact your pediatrician's office and ask about the flu vaccine for your child.

### IS IT SAFE?

Many parents wonder if the vaccine is safe. You might have heard that influenza vaccines can actually CAUSE the flu – NOT TRUE! The vaccine is made of "dead" viruses, which cannot cause illness. Some people have been known to experience soreness where they've received the vaccine for a day or two.

### WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD BE VACCINATED?

The ideal time for influenza vaccination is October and November.



### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE IT and WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT IT?

Winter is flu season, and *children* are most likely to get infected. But the flu (also called influenza) isn't just a problem for children. It's quite contagious and easily spreads to people of all ages, resulting in flu epidemics almost every year. Once infected with the flu, a person is contagious from the day before symptoms appear until approximately 5 days after the illness begins. That gives the disease 6 days to spread.

Influenza can make a person feel ABSOLUTELY MISERABLE. The most common symptoms (you may not have all) experienced by people suffering from the flu include:

Sudden onset  
Fever  
Muscle aches

Headache  
Cough  
Sore throat

Fatigue  
Runny nose

### **What to do if you get the flu...**

**Some doctors may prescribe an anti-flu medication. If you or someone in your family begins to experience flu symptoms, you have 12 to 48 hours to take action – to possibly get this medication.**

**If your doctor does not suggest an anti-viral medication – remember to *drink* A LOT of fluids, *rest* as much as possible and take anti-fever, anti-pain medications as per doctor’s instructions. These things won’t get rid of the flu, but will help to make you feel much better.**



**MY CHILD IS SICK!!!**

**WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

ILLNESSES – Cold and flu season are upon us. Remind children to wash hands often. Please follow these simple rules when deciding whether or not to send your child to school:

- **Diarrhea/vomiting**: These illnesses make children very uncomfortable, and being near a bathroom is top priority. Keep your child home until they are free of diarrhea or vomiting for a full 24 hours.
- **Strep throat**: For any illness requiring antibiotics, such as strep throat or bronchitis, your child must have taken 24 full hours of medication before returning to school.
- **Runny nose**: This is the way many children respond to pollen, dust or change of season. If it isn’t a common cold but an allergy send them to school. They aren’t contagious.
- **Fever**: This is an important symptom: when it occurs along with a sore throat, earache, nausea, listlessness or a rash, your child may be carrying something very contagious. Most pediatricians advise parents to keep children for an **additional 24 hours after the fever has passed** (without medication).
- **Bad cough/cold symptoms**: This can indicate a severe cold, bronchitis, flu or even pneumonia. Kids can suffer many colds all fall & winter long and the run-of-the-mill cold shouldn’t keep them from school. Use your instincts, if your child is not “right”, err on the side of caution and check with your pediatrician.
- **Conjunctivitis or pink-eye**: Highly contagious and uncomfortable. Take heed when your child complains of an eye or eyes burning, itching and/or producing a discharge. If treatment is required, a **full 24 hours of eye drops** are necessary **before** a child returns to school.

If your child is not ill but just “under the weather” please send a note to alert their teacher. Frequent nurse visits can be minimized if both the teacher and nurse are aware of a child’s situation early in the day. Also, they must be able to participate fully in the day. If they are still unable to participate in gym, recess, etc., they may need an additional day at home with extra TLC to feel “all better”. When your child returns to school after an absence, please send them with a note for the nurse stating the specific reason for their absence.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

An easy way to make your child’s lunch a little healthier is to put some thought into their drink.

**MILK** – A great drink because it provides lots of essential nutrients. Many parents don’t realize that a serving of 1% milk contains fewer calories than a serving of juice!

**YOGURT DRINKS** - These are a good choice because they provide many of the nutritional benefits of yogurt in a drinkable form. Many contain beneficial active live cultures which may help improve gut health and boost the immune system.

**WATER** – Water is the PERFECT drink to replenish fluids that are lost from sweat and activities. A bottle of plain water doesn’t seem really glamorous or exciting, but it’s a great choice!

**100% JUICE** – Juice boxes or cartons should say 100% juice if that is all they contain. If your child’s juice doesn’t say 100% it’s probably “juice drink”. These contain preservatives, sweetening agents and sometimes oil! It’s

important to remember though that even 100% juice gets 100% of it's calories from sugar. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 4-6 ounces a day for kids under 6 and 8-12 ounces a day for kids over 7.

Stay away from sports drinks (or energy drinks). You may be tempted to toss them into the lunch box but they are not ideal for kids. Many of these drinks are packed with extra calories, caffeine and herbs not appropriate for kids.