

Brief Information on Common Illnesses

Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease

This illness is typical in the spring and fall. It usually causes fever, painful sores in the mouth and a rash on the hands and feet. It is a contagious illness caused by a group of viruses, most common coxsackie A16. The virus can be found in secretions, blister fluid and stool. People are typically contagious during the first week of the illness but the virus can persist for weeks. Symptoms can begin 3-5 days after exposure. It is not a serious illness and it typically resolves within 7-10 days. Treatment is pain and fever control and staying hydrated. Can return to school when no fever for 24 hours and all lesions have healed or crusted over.

Croup

This illness is characterized by a classic seal or barking cough and breathing problems due to swelling around the vocal cords. Fever, sore throat and general malaise are also seen. Multiple viruses cause croup and there are other less common causes. It is most typical to see this illness in the fall and winter and usually affects children under 5. Mild cases need supportive management with steam, a humidifier, cool air and managing congestion. Moderate to severe cases require medication(s) and close monitoring. Concerning signs are stridor (high pitch sounds when breathing), pale or blue colored skin around mouth or fingernails, difficulty swallowing. Duration of illness is typically 7-10 days. The virus can be found in secretions. Most contagious during the first few days of illness and symptoms can be seen 2-3 days after exposure. Can return to school when afebrile for 24 hours and typically after 3-4 days from onset of illness.

Common Cold

Symptoms are sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, cough. Not typical to have a fever, but children can have a mild fever. Symptoms often begin 1-3 days after exposure to a cold virus. The illness typically lasts 3-7 days and the first 3 days are the most contagious. The virus is found in secretions. Symptoms can linger for up to 2 weeks. Can return to school when no fever for 24 hours and 3 days after onset illness.

Flu (Influenza)

Due to multiple flu viruses. More severe symptoms than a cold and a rapid onset. Symptoms include fever, sore throat, runny nose and cough, headache, muscle and body aches, malaise. The virus is spread in respiratory secretions. You are contagious from day before onset of symptoms to about day 5. Typically lasts about 1 week. Can return to school when no fever for 24 hours and child is improving.