

Tips For Keeping Children Healthy
Freyja Clinic: Treating the Whole Child
Aarti Nasta MD & Carmela Yarlagadda MD
draartinasta@gmail.com
650-302-8337

We are only a few weeks into the school year and we are already seeing various illnesses. We will soon be entering flu season. Here are some tips to keep our children healthy and boost their immunity as fall and winter approach.

Tips to staying healthy:

1) Continue with a healthy lifestyle. This seems straightforward and simple, but it is amazing how we do not do these things in our busy lives.

This means making sure our children are:

- Eating well balanced meals
- Having adequate sleep
- Participating in regular exercise
- Decreasing stress

2) Update immunizations.

This includes obtaining this season's flu vaccine.

3) Take standard precautions

- Avoiding close contact with those who are ill
- Staying home when ill until free from fever for 24 hours
- Covering coughs and sneezes
- Washing hands
- Cleansing +/- disinfecting surfaces contaminated with germ

Supplements to help boost immunity:

1) Probiotics help the immune system function properly. When taken daily they reduce the incidence and duration of cold and flu symptoms. Sources include: yogurt and Kefir, supplements, fermented foods, some infant formulas. When choosing a supplement look for strains that specifically support immunity.

2) Elderberry (Sambucus) has antiviral and immunostimulatory properties. It can decrease the duration of cold and flu symptoms.

3) Vitamin D is essential for bone health and immune and cardiovascular function. Low levels increase the risk for infection. Children under 1 year old should receive 400 IU per day and older children 600 IU per day.

- 4) **Green Smoothies/Hearty Oatmeal** are great ways to pack in immune boosting substances including chia seeds, flax seeds, cruciferous veggies, turmeric, ginger and cinnamon.

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 often 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 1st 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 7-10days. 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 barky 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 3-7days and the first 3 days are the most contagious. 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 improving.

