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Empowering Children through Creative Learning

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Ways to Keep Your Children Healthy in Winter

As winter arrives, you may be dreading the colds, flu, and general bugs that seem to accompany it. Here are some tips to help you and your children stay healthy this winter and minimize days off school.

Washing Your Hands

Teach your children to wash their hands well and often. This includes before and after meals, after using the toilet and when they come home from school. You can also use alcohol-based wipes or gels when a water source is not readily available.

Keep Warm

Make sure you and your children are dressed appropriately for the colder weather. Jackets, gloves, and hats are all important clothing pieces to protect against the elements and keep your body in tip top shape.

Eat Well

Make sure your children get well-balanced meals. Give your family the vitamins and minerals they need, so their bodies have the energy to stay healthy. Although your children may not be sweating as much as they do in warm-weather months, they still need to keep hydrated. Smart choices for winter are water and low-sugar juices that are high in vitamin C, which studies show can lessen the severity and duration of winter colds. Decaffeinated tea and hot cocoa are also wise picks — these comforting hot drinks are a great source of antioxidants, which are believed to strengthen the immune system. Good nutrition can help children fight off cold and flu season, so strengthen their immune system with a balanced diet. Snack time is a great opportunity to sneak in some extra nutrients; try dried and fresh fruits, sliced raw vegetables, whole-wheat crackers with cheese and yogurt.

Sleep

Sleep is one of the most important things we can do to give our body a boost against sickness this winter. Each member of your family should get at least 7 hours of restful sleep each night, more for your younger children (10-13 hours).

Food Safety

As you prepare your meals, wash your hands often when handling food. Keep any raw meats, poultry, and eggs away from food that is ready to eat or already prepared. Invest in a quality food thermometer to check the temperature of all of your cooked meals, make sure they are at least at the proper eating temperature. Do not use the same knives, cutting boards, or utensils to prepare raw foods and ready-to-eat foods.

Get vaccinated.

Children six months to 5 years of age are considered high risk for complications from the flu. The best way to prevent your child from getting the flu is to get them vaccinated. Vaccinations are available as an injection and a nasal spray.

Generally, the best time to get vaccinated is October or November, but it is still beneficial to get one. These are offered in school to year 1, 2 and 3 children with parental consent.

Soothe a sore throat.

Sometimes your child may develop a sore throat along with a cold. This is usually caused by a viral infection, and should go away in a few days. If a sore throat persists longer than this or if your child has difficulty swallowing, swollen glands, discharge when he coughs, or blisters in his throat, call your Doctor.

For a minor cough or sore throat, over the counter syrups are available, and food such as ice-pops and soft food may be soothing and feel good to eat.