CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA
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STAYING HEALTHY

PRACTICING ILLNESS PREVENTION



Children need to be in the best possible health in order to reach their full potential. Often, preventing an illness is easier than curing a sickness once it has started. There are many things you can do to help yourself and your family stay healthy and reduce your chances of getting sick, so you can have the well-being you deserve.



When one person in the family becomes sick, everyone is affected. Many illnesses are contagious, meaning other family members may also get sick. Children lose time in school, and parents lose time at work. By developing some basic strategies such as teaching your children good hygiene, making sure that they are getting enough sleep, and encouraging healthy eating, you can prevent illnesses before they begin.



Teach children to use a tissue to wipe their nose and cover their mouth when they sneeze or cough.

ILLNESS PREVENTION

REDUCING ILLNESS IN CHILD CARE

Many illnesses are spread by children because they have increased contact with each other and often put shared items into their mouths. As a parent there are things that you can do to reduce the spread of illness in your child's child care.



- Follow the caregiver's illness policy
- Keep your child home if your child experiences any of the following:
  - Oral temperature of 100°or higher
  - Vomiting or diarrhea
  - Eye infection, rash, lice, or nits
  - Other unusual symptoms or behavior

HOW ILLNESSES ARE SPREAD

Illnesses are spread in various ways. Understanding how different illnesses are spread can help you practice better prevention methods.

- Airborne: Spread by coughs, sneezes, or secretions from the nose or mouth.
- Fecal/oral: Spread by way of the hands from contact with the bowel movement to food or other objects going into the mouth.
- Blood/body fluids: Spread by direct contact between the blood and/or body fluids.
- Direct contact: Spread by direct contact between an infected person and an uninfected person.

HANDWASHING REALLY HELPS

One of the most successful ways to prevent the spread of disease is through regular, proper handwashing. Help your children develop the habit of washing their hands before eating or handling food, after toileting, nose-blowing, handling anything that is dirty, or after playing outdoors. You may want to post instructions with pictures as a friendly reminder. Make sure sinks are accessible to younger children by keeping a small stool nearby.

Remember to wash your own hands after changing a baby's diaper to prevent the spread of germs. It is important for parents and caregivers to model good hygiene behaviors.

Below are the steps to a good handwashing routine:

- Use warm water to loosen dirt
- Use soap
- Wash hands well, rub vigorously for about 10-15 seconds
- Rinse with warm water
- Dry thoroughly using a disposable towel or clean cloth towel

Schedule regular check-ups, including dental and vision. Make sure all vaccinations are current. Keep a detailed medical history of each child.

GOOD HEALTH STARTS BEFORE YOUR CHILD IS BORN

If you are pregnant, it is very important to be proactive in giving your child a healthy start in life. Make sure you are receiving proper prenatal care, including regular check-ups, taking prenatal vitamins, eating well, and avoiding alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD DENTAL HYGIENE

Taking good care of teeth is part of staying healthy. Poor dental care can lead to other illnesses. You can help protect your children's teeth by following these habits:

- Don't allow your baby to fall asleep with a bottle
- Offer healthy foods that are low in sugar
- Develop teeth brushing routines after meals and before bedtime
- Have your child see a pediatric dentist by age one



CREATE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Without enough rest, children are more likely to become sick, as well as have a harder time physically, emotionally, and socially. Make sure your child is getting the right amount of sleep, depending upon their age. Creating a relaxing bedtime routine that may include putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, and reading stories, helps children fall asleep more easily.

EAT WELL

Eating properly is an important part of illness prevention. A balanced diet, including drinking enough fluids, is certain to reduce illness. By shopping, cooking, and eating healthfully as a family, you can help your children develop healthy eating habits now that will last a lifetime.

EXERCISE REGULARLY

Another important part of creating a healthy lifestyle is making sure your children get enough exercise. By limiting the time children spend watching television and playing video games, and increasing their level of daily activity, you can increase their chances of staying well.

AVOID STRESS

Although some stress is unavoidable, prolonged stress can weaken the body's immune system, making it easier to get sick. By developing tools to cope with stress such as getting support from family and friends, seeking counseling, or learning relaxation techniques, you can greatly reduce the harmful effects of stress.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COLD AND THE FLU

Flu symptoms are usually worse than cold symptoms, but sometimes it can be hard to tell the difference.

Symptom	Flu	Cold
Fever	High	No or mild
Energy level	Low	Normal or slightly low
Cough	Dry	Severe or hacking
Sore throat	Yes	No
Headache	Yes	No or mild
Loss of appetite	Yes	No
Muscle aches	Yes	No
Chills	Yes	No

HOW TO CARE FOR A COLD OR THE FLU

Below are things that you can do to help ease your child's discomfort:

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest
- Give your child lots of fluids to drink
- Use a humidifier while your child is sleeping
- Use a bulb syringe to clear your baby's nose
- Teach your child to blow his or her nose into a tissue

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

TISSUE, PLEASE!
Lisa Kopelke

A GERMS JOURNEY: DIRTY HANDS! CLEAN HANDS!
Katie Laird & Sarah Younie

CUTIE SUE FIGHTS THE GERMS: AN ADORABLE CHILDREN'S BOOK ABOUT HEALTH AND PERSONAL HYGIENE
Kate Melton

ORGANIZATIONS

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
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