

NOTES FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE

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Colds, the flu, most sore throats and bronchitis are caused by viruses. Did you know that antibiotics do not help fight viruses? Taking antibiotics when you have a virus may do more harm than good. Since antibiotics fight bacteria, taking antibiotics for viral infections, such as a cold, cough, bronchitis, or the flu will not cure the infections. It won't keep other individuals from catching the illness or help you feel better. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment.

To protect yourself and /or your children, the CDC recommends that you use the following guidelines in regards to antibiotics. Do not demand antibiotics when a doctor says they are not needed. They will not help treat your infection. When you are prescribed an antibiotic, it is important to take it exactly as the doctor tells you. Do not skip doses. Complete the prescribed course even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too soon, some bacteria may survive and re-infect you. If you have leftover medication due to a change of antibiotic, be sure to discard it. Do not save any antibiotics for the next time you get sick. Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. The antibiotic may not be appropriate for your illness. Taking the wrong medicine may delay correct treatment and allow bacteria to multiply.

With cold and flu season just around the corner, it is important to recognize and prevent disease transmission as much as possible. Both are upper respiratory infections with symptoms of sore throat, sneezing, nasal congestion and a cough. The main difference is the severity of symptoms. Influenza, "the flu" usually has a sudden onset and may include a fever, chills, body aches, and extreme fatigue. It may last for several days. Children should remain home from school until twenty-four hours after the fever has subsided.

Increasingly it is being recommended for children as well as adults to get a flu vaccine. Parents should check with their physicians about the pros and cons of their children getting the flu

vaccine. People with chronic illnesses such as asthma or diabetes are generally advised to get a flu vaccine.

Remind your children to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue or upper sleeve (not their hands) when they cough or sneeze. They should wash their hands after and often with soap and water. If water is not near, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner. Individual water bottles for drinking also help decrease disease transmission at school.

Always seek medical attention for prolonged, severe, or unusual symptoms of any kind to insure proper diagnosis and prompt appropriate treatments. I appreciate hearing about physicians' advice after I have referred someone to the doctor. Thank you to all the parents who call and keep me informed of what's "going around."