

# Nurse's Corner

## Spirit Lake Community Schools

*Spirit Lake School Nurses are committed to promoting the health and well-being of all students so that they may achieve academic success and develop lifelong healthy habits!*

### The Common Cold and Influenza

#### **What causes the Cold and the Flu?**

The Common Cold and Influenza (Flu) are both respiratory illnesses caused by viruses. The Common Cold is caused by over 200 different viruses (like rhinovirus, RSV, coronavirus, adenovirus). The Flu is caused by influenza viruses only.

#### **How can I tell the difference between the Cold and the Flu?**

The Cold and the Flu have similar symptoms, which can make telling the difference between them difficult! With a Cold, you are more likely to have a runny nose than you are with the Flu. Cold symptoms are gradual and usually do not result in serious problems. The Flu is generally worse than the Cold. Flu symptoms are more intense and begin more abruptly. The Flu can cause serious complications such as pneumonia and hospitalizations. A special test by a healthcare provider can tell if you have the Flu. Here's a chart with some general information of Cold vs. Flu:

IS IT A COLD OR FLU?		
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS	INFLUENZA	COLD
Symptom onset	Abrupt	Gradual
Fever	Usual	Rare
Aches	Usual	Slight
Chills	Fairly common	Uncommon
Fatigue, weakness	Usual	Sometimes
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common
Stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common
Chest discomfort, cough	Common	Mild to moderate
Headache	Common	Rare

### ***How do I avoid the Cold and the Flu?***

Colds and the Flu occur most often in the fall and winter due to the amount of time we spend indoors around other people. Some ways to prevent the spread of the Cold and Flu are:

- Take care of yourself to keep your immune system boosted and strong! Get enough rest, eat healthy, drink plenty of water, and exercise regularly.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or hand when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often! Wash when you arrive at school, before you eat, and when you get home from school. Scrub those hands!
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth. These are the entry points for germs!
- Talk to your healthcare provider about getting the influenza vaccine. It may prevent you from getting the flu and cause symptoms to be less severe if you do get it.

### ***What should I do if I get sick with the Cold or Flu?***

Unfortunately, there is not a cure for the Cold or the Flu. But there are some things listed below to help yourself feel better:

- Drink plenty of fluids and rest.
- Humidifiers may help loosen secretions and ease breathing.
- If you have been diagnosed with the Flu, an antiviral medication prescribed by your doctor may minimize symptoms and shorten duration of illness.
- Stay home if you have been diagnosed with the Flu to prevent spreading to others.
- Stay home if you have a fever >100 F to prevent spreading illness to others.
- OTC medications may help with runny nose, congestion, coughing, body aches and fever. Consult a pharmacist or doctor about taking decongestants, antihistamines, expectorants, cough suppressants, NSAIDs and Tylenol products. Be sure to follow label instructions.

If you have any questions, please contact the school nurses:

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