



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL

A Ministry of St. Joseph Parish

5411 SOUTH MAIN STREET
SYLVANIA, OHIO 43560

January 14, 2016

Dear St. Joseph Parents/Guardians,

As the 2015-2016 cold and influenza (flu) season begins, I would like to review some measures that may help your family stay healthier this season. One measure that is important for children is to get a seasonal influenza vaccine each year to protect against seasonal flu and its potential complications. For 2015-2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children aged 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. CDC also recommends adults who are in close contact with young children or adults in contact with children of any age with chronic illnesses to get the flu vaccine. The vaccine is widely available in our area. physician offices, the local health department, and local pharmacies.

Illnesses like colds and flu are spread from person to person via respiratory droplets. These droplets are spread by coughing, sneezing or by touching objects or people with contaminated hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs.

Another illness that is common during the winter months is the “stomach bug” or gastroenteritis. Noroviruses are responsible for about half of all gastroenteritis outbreaks. Norovirus outbreaks occur throughout the year, but over 80% of them occur during November-April. Although viral illnesses can spread from person to person during normal daily activities, there are some simple things which help reduce the spread of illness. Please remind your children of the following health habits.

1. **Cover their mouth and nose when sneezing.** If they can, they should use a tissue and then throw it away, washing their hands afterwards. If they don't have a tissue handy, they should use their inner elbow or upper sleeve rather than their hands. This practice prevents the spread of germs via their hands.
2. **Keep their hands away from their eyes, nose, and mouth.**
3. **Clean their hands often.** Remind them to wash with soap and warm water. The teachers give them bathroom breaks throughout the day and I hear teachers frequently sending children back into the bathroom to wash properly. In addition to reminding them to use soap and water, the children at school are frequently reminded to not rush through washing their hands. A recommendation to help them wash long enough is to have them



say a prayer, song or even the ABC's silently to themselves while washing. When the song or prayer is finished then they have washed long enough.

4. **Remind them to not share cups, water bottles, or eating utensils.** I see children offering their water bottles at sporting practices and games when their peers forget their own water bottle.

5. **Children should stay home when they are sick.** They should stay home if they have a fever. If they have had a recent fever, they should not return to school until they have been fever free for 24 hours (without the help from Tylenol or Ibuprofen). This means that if they are sent home with an elevated temperature from the clinic, they are asked to stay home on the following day. This is to allow time to ensure that their elevated temperature does not return (ensures the 24 hour free of fever policy). They should also stay home (with or without fever) if they have symptoms which are obvious of illness, i.e. recent vomiting, cough, malaise, congestion. Sometimes it is difficult to decide in the morning whether a child is well enough to attend school. Call the school if you are in doubt. You can also ask yourself, "Can my child go through the day with minimal disruption to himself and others?" This may help you make a decision on one of those mornings when it is difficult to decide. By staying home when they are sick, children are helping themselves recuperate and are helping their peers stay healthy. By working together, I believe we can reduce the spread of illness at St. Joseph School.

Sincerely,

Therese M. Hoehn RN, BSN, CPN
School Nurse